


GREEK WONDER TALES

EDITED BY LUCY·M·J·GARNETT

Illustrated by A·NORBURY





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GREEK WONDER TALES

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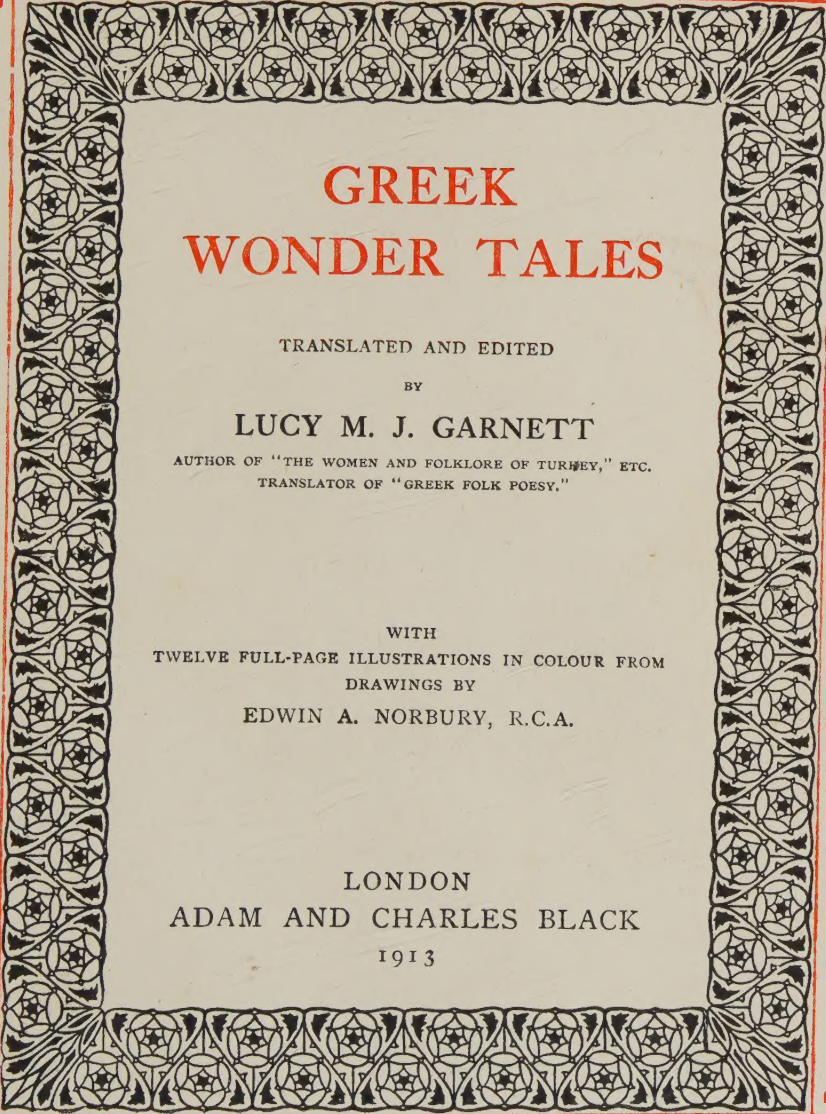
AGENTS

AMERICA	THE MACMILLAN COMPANY 64 & 66 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK
AUSTRALASIA	OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS 205 FLINDERS LANE, MELBOURNE
CANADA	THE MACMILLAN COMPANY OF CANADA, LTD. ST MARTIN'S HOUSE, 70 BOND STREET, TORONTO
INDIA	MACMILLAN & COMPANY, LTD. MACMILLAN BUILDING, BOMBAY 309 BOW BAZAAR STREET, CALCUTTA



AT SUNSET HE ENTERED THE PALACE.

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GREEK WONDER TALES

TRANSLATED AND EDITED

BY

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WITH

TWELVE FULL-PAGE ILLUSTRATIONS IN COLOUR FROM
DRAWINGS BY

EDWIN A. NORBURY, R.C.A.

LONDON

ADAM AND CHARLES BLACK

1913

FOREWORD

IN translating the following Tales from the various Greek dialects in which they have been orally transmitted from generation to generation by the unlettered folk, I have retained the native terms for the mythical personages who figure in them only when no adequate English equivalent could be found.

These mythical personages include, among others, Fates and Nereids, the Lamia or *Stríngla*, the *Stoicheíon* or 'Genius,' and the *Dhráko*. The Fates, in modern folk-belief, closely resemble their classic prototypes, and, as in ancient times, occupy a place above and behind all gods. They are popularly represented as presiding more particularly over the three great events of man's existence—'the Three Evils of Destiny' (τὰ τρία κακά τῆς Μοίρης), birth, marriage, and death. As they, in olden time, came to Altheia, and made the life of her newly born son, Meleagros,

dependent on the burning brand, so in folk-belief the Three Weird Women visit every child on the third day after its birth, and assign to it good or bad fortune, which no power can alter and no precaution avert. Two of the Fates suggest a destiny for the infant, but the dictum of the third is final, and it is she who thenceforward acts as the special *Moir*a of that individual, often assuming the rôle generally assigned in the West to the 'fairy godmother,' and appearing at critical moments to help the hero or heroine.

The Nereid, Syren, and Lamia are also survivals of classical myths, and appear to display at the present day very much the same propensities as their prototypes. As it is considered unlucky, or even dangerous, to mention them by these names, they are generally alluded to generically under the euphemisms of 'The Outsiders' (τὰ ἐξωτικὰ), 'The Beautiful Ladies,' 'The Brides of May,' 'The Lucky Ones,' or 'The Friendly Ones,' etc. The Nereids, who occupy in the Greek popular imagination a place similar to the Fairies in western countries, and, like them, are proverbial for their beauty, differ from them in being invariably of the full stature of mortals. Popular belief

divides them into two classes—‘Nereids of the Sea’ and ‘Nereids of the Mountain’; and such phenomena of nature as whirlwinds and storms being ascribed to their agency, the peasant or shepherd will bow to the ground when he hears them passing overhead, as otherwise the Nereids might punish him for his lack of reverence by carrying him off with them to their mountain haunts. Offerings of milk, honey, and cakes are made to these ‘outsiders’ in certain spots which they are believed to frequent; and the country-women, when they see the wind-driven clouds scudding overhead, repeat aloud the words, ‘Honey and milk!’ to avert all evil from themselves. Tempestuous weather is also sometimes attributed to the festivities attendant on a wedding among the Nereids. They are held to marry, as a rule, male beings of their own kind; but they also occasionally fall in love with mortal men, who, if they return their affection and prove faithful to them, are rewarded with great prosperity.

The Lamia, on the other hand, is generally represented as an ill-favoured and malevolently disposed being who haunts desert places and lonely sea-shores. Occasionally, however, she appears under

the form of a beautiful woman, who, like the Siren, lures men to destruction with her wiles, her sweet voice and graceful dancing, or lays wagers with them in which the mortal is inevitably the loser. There are also stories of Lamiaë who have wedded mortals and borne children to them. But woe to the unhappy peasant saddled with such a helpmate! For she can neither spin, weave, knit, nor sew, and is equally incapable of sweeping, cooking, or taking care of the domestic animals. So firm a hold, indeed, has this belief on the popular mind that the expression ‘a Lamia’s sweepings’ exists as a domestic proverb, often applied by an indignant Greek housewife to a careless maidservant. The little waterspouts formed of gathered wreaths of spray, so often seen in the Ægean Sea, are looked upon with great awe by the dwellers in the islands and on the seaboard. ‘The Lamia of the Sea is abroad,’ say the peasants and fisher-folk when they see the wind-driven spray-wreaths. And having usually recourse to Christian aid when frightened by pagan superstitions, and *vice versâ*, they will cross themselves repeatedly, muttering at the same time invocations to the *Panaghía*—the ‘all-holy’

Virgin—for protection against these demons of the air and water.

The *Dhrákos* (Δράκος or Δράκοντας) would appear to be the modern representative of Polyphemos and the Cyclops, being frequently described in Greek folk-tale as having one eye only, but invariably as endowed with superhuman strength. ‘As strong as a Dhrako’ is, indeed, an everyday proverb. In many of his characteristics he closely resembles the Rakshasa of India, the Troll of Scandinavia, and the Giant of Western Europe generally. Sometimes he has a wife—the *Dhrákissa*, *Dhrákaina*, or *Dhrakóntissa*—and sons and daughters; is of cannibalistic habits, but at the same time inordinately fond of cheese, which, if he has no flocks of his own, he will steal from the nomad shepherds. He carries off princesses, whom he weds, and is often the possessor of magical powers and objects. The Dhrako is also represented as living, like the Cyclops, in a cave, pasturing his own flocks and tilling his fields, or hiring mortals to till and reap them for him; though he at the same time is the owner of a palace or castle, sometimes underground. He possesses untold wealth; his palace is furnished

with Oriental magnificence, and he is occasionally conventional enough to go to Mass! But though of great stature and immense strength, the Dhrako, like our own giants, is not remarkable for intelligence, and is easily outwitted and imposed upon by a courageous or wily hero, these heroes being usually 'Widows' Sons,' or the youngest of three brothers. Some translators have rendered Δράκος as 'Dragon.' He would, however, seem to be rather a Giant than a Dragon in our acceptance of the term; and in the ballad describing St George's encounter with that creature the Greek word used is not Δράκος but θειρό=Monster.

The *Stringla* (στρίγγλα, or στρίγλα, = Italian *striga* or *struga*, and Albanian ξτριγκεα, a witch) appears in the story of 'The Stringla Princess' (No. VII) to be rather a man-devouring, half-human monster than a witch in the ordinary acceptance of the term, though witches of the conventional type still drive a thriving trade among all the nationalities of South-Eastern Europe, and a Greek folk-ballad refers to one of these as 'a thousand-year-old woman.'

The *Stoicheíon*—a word which may perhaps be best rendered as 'Elemental,' or 'World-Spirit'—

is a direct personification of the elements. He is frequently met with in Greek ballad and legend, and often heard and seen by lonely shepherd, belated traveller, or maiden fetching water from a distant fountain, and his attributes in some points resemble those of the Dhrako. To the first he may appear as a man-eating monster, but the last he will invite in seductive accents to visit the beautiful palace in which he resides below the waters of his well or fountain. Some of these *Stoicheía*, like the Hamadryads of old, dwell in trees, but have the same propensities as their fellows inhabiting the mountains, rocks, and waters, and can only be slain by that popular hero of folk-song and folk-tale, 'The Widow's Son.' A legend current in Roumelia relates that the Stoicheion of the Sea was at war for a thousand years with the Stoicheion of the Plane-tree, and that every time a struggle took place between them there was great mortality in the neighbourhood of the combat. The 'Mother of the Sea' (No. I) may probably be considered one of these elemental personifications, as also the 'Mother of the Sun,' 'Mother of the North Wind,' etc.

The *Stoicheía* may apparently be looked upon

as survivors of the beings referred to by St Paul as, ‘The weak and beggarly elements whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage’; ‘The rulers of the darkness of this world’; ‘The rudiments of the world,’ etc., the translation of the word *στοιχεῖα* as ‘rudiments’—which has also been followed in the Revised Version—completely obscuring what appears to be the true meaning of these passages in the Epistles. For in the Apostle’s use of the phrase, *κατὰ τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ Κόσμου*, he evidently attributed a distinct personality to these elemental spirits, who to this day linger, as of old, by

‘spring and vale,
Edged with poplar pale,’

reposing during the noontide heats beneath the shade of certain trees to which they have ever been partial—planes, poplars, and others, which the wary peasant and shepherd will carefully avoid at this hour, fearful of the consequences of annoying these capricious beings by breaking in on their sacred repose.

L. M. J. G.

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GREEK WONDER TALES

I

THE MOTHER OF THE SEA, OR THE STORY OF YIÁNKO ,

ONCE upon a time there was a fisherman who had no children, and on that account he was sad and discontented. He became, too, very unlucky. If he cast his nets he never caught any fish. The first time he brought them up empty; the second time they were full of seaweed. The third time they were very heavy, and he said to himself,

‘Ah! now they must be full of fish!’

He drew them, but they were full of sand and mud. So it happened for a month and more, though now and again he would find a small sea-gudgeon hidden in the mud. His poor wife waited every evening in the hope that he

would bring something home, and despaired every time when it was only a small gudgeon to cook on the gridiron. What could that avail them? They were hungry and had no bread. One day, when he had cast his nets, and left them a long time in the sea, he had much difficulty in drawing them up; but again he found only quantities of stones and mud, and his nets torn to pieces. '*Ach! Ach!*' he sighed, as he sat in his boat.

Then came there up the Mother of the Sea on the foam, and said to him,

'Why dost thou sigh so deeply? Thy sighs wither the very trees!'

'I am in despair because for a month and more I have cast my nets without being able to take a single fish. I have no bread to eat, and now my nets are all torn to pieces.'

'If you will promise me to bring up a son, well taught and well nourished, and when he is eighteen years of age to bring him to me on the beach as a husband for my youngest daughter—for the two eldest are already married—you will catch plenty of fish.'

'But I have no children!'

‘Give me thy word, and that will be my business.’

He gave his word, thinking, ‘What does it matter to me what I promise, who have not so much as a puppy dog!’

He patched up his nets as well as he could, threw them again, and with that one cast caught a boatload of fish. Having sold them, he went home with his handkerchief full of gold pieces, bought new nets, plenty of bread and meat, wine even, the utmost he could desire.

On the following day he cast his new nets, and caught as much fish; and again he gained a handkerchief full of money. Thus it was day after day, and, as the way of the world is, the other fishermen became jealous of him. But soon the fishermen’s wives were jealous too. Months came and months went, the goodwife was full of joy that she was at last to have a child after she had given up all hope of one. But the fisherman was sad. His wife asked him,

‘Why, my good man, other people have half a score of children, and don’t trouble about it, and we who have wished so much to have a

child, should we not thank God instead of being sad ?’

‘How shall I tell you, wife? The Mother of the Sea made me take an oath to her, and that is why I take so many fish.’

The woman was much distressed, but what could she do?—*he had promised*. Soon afterwards a son was born to them, and they christened him Yiánko, and he was a most beautiful child. They brought him up like the son of a noble, for they were now rich; they sent him to school, and he became a great scholar. When he was eighteen years of age, the Mother of the Sea came out again on the foam, and said to the fisherman,

‘It is time to bring me the boy.’

He returned home, took a sack, and said to his son, ‘Follow me!’ He took him down to the water’s edge, got into the boat, and said to him, ‘I am going to fish; do thou gather seaweed here and fill the sack, and stay with it till I return.’

So the fisherman went in his boat to the deep waters, and said to the Mother of the Sea, ‘I have brought the boy to the beach, and you may go and take him.’

The Sea then threw herself upon him to seize him as he gathered the seaweed. But he, being wide-awake, and seeing the huge wave coming, fled, and the Sea followed him. He took to the fields, and the Sea chased him till he came to a high mountain which she could not climb. So the Sea returned and let him escape.

The fisherman asked her, 'Eh, did you find the boy?'

'He fled, but I shall catch him yet. Will he not come back to the beach? 'You have not wronged me, you shall catch fish as before.'

The youth descended the mountain on the farther side, climbed another, and went on, and on. Presently he saw an eagle and a lion quarrelling over a dying ass. When they saw the youth, they called to him—for at that time even the animals talked, so they say—'Come and divide it for us!'

So Yiánko takes out his knife, stabs the ass, and kills it, takes out the bones and gives them to the lion, and the eagle eats the flesh. Then they say to him,

'What favour dost thou ask of us?'

He, desiring nothing, said, 'What can I expect from you?'

Then the eagle plucked a feather from his breast, and said, 'Take care of this feather, and thou wilt not repent it. Whenever thou wilt, thou may'st become an eagle, and, when thou wilt, again a man.'

And the lion pulled out from his mane a hair, and said, 'Keep this hair, and when thou shalt burn it, I will gather together all the other lions, and we will do thy bidding.'

The youth hid the hair and the feather safely away in his girdle, and again he put the road before him. At night he slept under a tree. One day he met a shepherd, and greeted him:

'Good day to you! Will you take me to tend your sheep, that I may earn my bread?'

'These flocks belong to the King, and the palace is five hours' journey away. I may not take them nearer, because it is all gardens and fields belonging to other people, which are sown and planted at this season, and there is no pasture to be found there. Every morning I carry them a big skin of milk which the King's daughter likes better than

anything, and she likes it to be warm. If thou art active, and canst hop like a bird, I will take thee with me.'

'I can do more than that, for I can let her have it with the froth still upon it.'

So the shepherd took him home, and they ate together, and then they slept. While it was still night he milked the skin full, and then said to the youth, 'Off with thee, this is thine only business!'

The youth set off, and when he had gone a little way, he took out the feather and called 'Eagle!'

He became an eagle, and in the early morning he arrived with the froth still upon the milk. He became a man again, and went upstairs. When the Princess saw him, she looked at him closely, and was more pleased than I can tell you. Said she, 'This is the first time I have seen thee?'

'Your shepherd has taken me as his servant, my Princess, to bring the milk to you.'

She asked him a great many questions, for he was handsome, and she had taken a fancy to him. So not to make a long story of it, he carried the

milk to her every day as fresh as fresh could be. The Princess always received him kindly and gave him pocket-money in secret. And wasn't he just as fond of her? He observed her fancy for him, and her notice of him, but was shamefaced, because he was but a shepherd. What stratagem does he resort to? He takes a sackful of grain and throws it on an ants' nest. The ants come swarming out and carry it into their hole. Then they ask him,

‘What favour desirest thou in return for what thou hast done for us?’

‘Only that I may become, whenever I wish, an ant, like you.’

The King of the ants pulled out one of his wings and gave it to him, saying, ‘Take care of it, and whenever thou wilt thou canst become an ant.’

He takes it and goes at night to the outside of the palace, cries, ‘Ant!’ and at once he was changed into an ant. The youth crept into a cranny of the palace-wall, and entered the Princess's chamber. He saw her lying asleep, and at each corner of her bed hung a lighted lamp. He became a man, put out the lamps, went to the

Princess and kissed her. She awoke and screamed, and he again became an ant.

Her father, the King, gets up from his bed, and going to her room with a candle, he asks, 'Why didst thou scream?'

'Someone kissed me!'

The King searched here and there—(how should he find the man when he had changed into an ant, and was hidden in a chink of the floor?)—and then said, 'Thou must have fancied it, my girl,' and went back to his own chamber and lay down.

After a little while the ant again became a youth, and he pinched her cheek, and again she screamed, and again the King came in.

'What is the matter?'

'A man pinched me!'

He looks about, but there was nobody, for the youth had again become an ant.

'Thou hast been dreaming, my child, and awoke out of thy sleep, and hast spoilt my rest too,' he said grumblingly, and went away.

After a little while Yiánko again took his own shape, and caressed the Princess. Once more she screamed, and once more Yiánko was an ant in

the cranny, so that he might not be trod upon. Again the King rises from his bed.

‘What *is* the matter again that thou screamest?’

‘Papa, I felt a man’s hand caressing me!’

Again the King searched, but found nothing.

‘Where then is the man?’ he asked. ‘The doors are all locked, where could he have gone? Every hour thou wakest me up unnecessarily until I am itching with sleepiness; if thou screamest again I shall whip thee, a thing I have never yet done!’ And again he goes back to his chamber.

Once more the ant becomes a man; he finds the tinder-box—that was how they struck a light then—and rekindled the lamps, for he knew that if the Princess were again frightened she would call out. When she saw him she said softly, ‘My Yiánko, was it thou, and all the time I knew it not? Where didst thou hide thyself?’

Then he related everything to her—how that the Sea had come forth to take him away; how he had fled, and she had pursued him as far as the mountain; how he had the eagle’s feather and the ant’s wing, and how everything had happened. Then she understood that it was by becoming an

eagle that he had been able to bring the milk to her so quickly with the froth upon it, and by becoming an ant, that her father had not seen him. Then they lay down in each other's arms and slept, and in the morning she went to her parents and said,

‘I want this one for my husband.’

‘What? this lad, my daughter?—this shepherd lad, when so many others are asking for you?’

But when they saw her determination, they consented, so as not to lose her love, and married her with great pomp, and many guests were invited to the wedding. Then the shepherd found out where Yiánko had been all the day and night that he had been missing. Now, however, he was dressed like a prince, and went out with his wife, and she loved him to distraction.

One day he sees the King pensive, and says to him, ‘What is the matter, father-in-law, why are you sad?’

‘I have a quarrel with another King, and he has declared war against me, and I find that I am not prepared for war, neither have I many troops.’

‘And are you going to wait, father-in-law, until

they arrive here? We will go forward and fight against them in the name of God.'

So he persuaded the King, and they made ready and set out together with the troops. Then the Princess fell upon her father's neck, saying, 'Papa, my Yiánko—who is dear to thee as thine eyes—see that thou let him not go near the ocean, for fear the Sea should take him from me!'

Then they went away, and met the enemy, and fought with them. Yiánko did all in his power; he rushed on with his sword and slew many; but they were the more numerous, and it was '*alas! for the strong man who is seized by two feeble ones!*' as the saying is. The enemy had nearly gained the day, and the youth and his father-in-law were sorely pressed, but at that moment he burned the lion's hair, and in a moment all the lions gathered around him, and he cried, 'Why wait ye? Fall on the enemy!'

They threw themselves on the foe. Some were wounded, others were killed, and the rest were scattered miserably with their King. And Yiánko, on horseback, rode, sword in hand, amid his lions, and slew scores of them. When the battle was over, Yiánko was about to go and wash in the Sea,

which was close by, when his father-in-law called to him, 'Where goest thou? Where goest thou?' and prevented him, but gave orders to his men to bring water for him to wash in. Early the next morning they set out for the capital of the foreign King, and found that he had collected his scattered forces to prevent if possible his capital being taken. So the battle began again, and again Yiánko lighted the lion's hair, and the lions fell upon them with Yiánko at their head, and they slew all the enemy, and Yiánko killed the King with his own sword.

Again he ran, all bloodstained, to the Sea to wash. His father-in-law, overjoyed at the victory, forgot to warn him, and as soon as the youth reached the margin and dipped his hand in the water, the Sea threw herself upon him, and drew him in. His father-in-law waited for him; but as Yiánko did not return he went to the beach in the hope of overtaking and warning him, but saw nothing of him. Then he concluded that the Sea must have taken him; and he who had been so joyful was consumed with sorrow, because he had lost his son who had been the hero and the victor in the battle; and he returned to the palace full

of grief. Seeing him come back alone and without Yíanko, his daughter lost her senses, and, tearing her hair, she cried,

‘Little Papa, I will go and seek my husband, but you must get ready for me a great ship with three decks and forty youths and forty maidens; you must give me also three golden apples, and I will go in the ship.’

‘*Bravo*, my daughter, for he is the man who not only saved my life, but brought me out with a white face.¹ All that thou wouldst do is befitting, God grant thou find him.’

He got ready for her the three-decked ship, put on board the forty youths with various kinds of music, and forty maidens to wait upon the Princess, ordered them to make for her three large apples of gold, and she embarked.

They set sail, and go forth on the ocean. The Princess bids the maidens sing, and the youths accompany them on their instruments. She holds an apple in her hand and plays with it. Then up comes the Mother of the Sea, and says to her,

¹ *I.e.*, ‘an unblushing face.’ How much more graphic and picturesque a phrase than our abstract, ‘saved his honour.’ The Albanians make use of a similar expression.

‘What a grand concert, bless your eyes! Give me that golden apple to take to my eldest daughter who has smelt it, and I will give you what you will.’

‘I am a King’s daughter, and Yiánko, whom you took away, was my husband. Put out his head only for me to see, and I will give you the apple.’

The Mother of the Sea put out the head of her son-in-law, and when he saw the Princess his heart went out of him and he sank. Then the Princess threw the apple into the sea. The ship sailed away. After a while the Princess bade them begin to sing again, and she played with the second golden apple. The Mother of the Sea again came up, and said,

‘Give me, Princess, the apple, my second daughter longs for it.’

‘If you will let me see my Yiánko down to his waist, I will give it to you.’

She throws her the apple, and the Mother of the Sea brings up Yiánko as far as his waist, and he saw his wife, and his heart fluttered and again he was lost to sight.

The ship sailed on. Presently the Princess

again commanded the forty maidens and the forty youths to begin singing, and she held the third apple in her hand and played with it. The Mother of the Sea came out again, and said,

‘For God’s sake, my Princess, my third daughter who has married Yiánko and who is ill has smelt the apple, give it to her that she may not die.’

‘Show me the whole of Yiánko erect and free from your hands, and I will give it.’

‘That I will,’ says she.

The Mother of the Sea took the apple, and raised up Yiánko erect and free. When he no longer felt the Sea flowing above him, he cried ‘Eagle!’ and became an eagle, and flew into the ship, and went below to the cabin, and became a man again, and the Princess followed him. A mad wind arose and the waves washed over the vessel; but he was shut up in the cabin, and the Sea could not get hold of him. Thanks to the worthy captain and the good ship they weathered the storm, and cast anchor and came safely ashore when within an inch of drowning. Then they travelled for two days and nights till they came again to the palace. From



HE CRIED "EAGLE"! AND BECAME AN EAGLE, AND FLEW INTO THE SHIP.

Page 16.

this time Yíanko remembered never again to go near the Sea. And he became King when his father-in-law died. And the Princess and he lived and grew old, and brought up their children.

II

THE WILD MAN

ONCE upon a time there was a King and a Queen, and they had an only son. This King was always sorrowful because he foresaw that, as he had neither soldiers nor money, if any other King were at any time to declare war against him, he would take away his kingdom from him. This worm continually gnawed him, and so his lips never smiled; and every day he walked out into the country to dispel the gloom which was in his heart.

One day as he was out walking, a Monk met him on the road, and, seeing the King so moody, he asked him, ‘Sir King, what is the matter that thou art so sad?—always moody is your Majesty!’

‘Eh, my good Monk,’ says the King to him, ‘*every stick has its own smoke*,¹ you know. I am moody because one day I shall be undone; they

¹ A Greek proverb.

will take from me all my towns, because I have no soldiers.'

'Oh! Is that why thou art sorrowful, my King? I will tell thee what to do. In a certain place there is a Wild Man whom all the world fears for his strength. Collect thy soldiers, and send them to seize him; and when thou possessest such a Wild Man, no King can menace thee.'

Then the King was somewhat heartened and said, 'My good Monk, I will give thee whatever thou may'st desire, if only this is accomplished and the Wild Man brought to me, as thou sayest.'

And when he returns to the palace, he calls immediately his Twelve Councillors and tells them what the Monk had said to him. The Twelve, when they heard his words, rejoiced on the one hand, but looked grave on the other, for how was it possible to bring that Wild Man? So they said to the King, 'O Sir King, thou sayest that in a certain place away in the wilderness is to be found a Wild Man; but we must see if it is possible to bring him hither. We see no easier way than that he

who told thee of this Man should himself bring him.'

The next day, accordingly, very early in the morning, the King gets up and goes to seek the Monk; and when he had arrived at the same spot, the Monk again presented himself, and said, 'Eh, what hast thou done, my King?'

Then the King replies, 'Alas, my good Monk, I have done nothing. For I told my Twelve, and they said to me that no other could bring him save he who had given me the tidings.'

'Very well, Sir King, if thou biddest me, I will bring him to thee. Give me forty thousand soldiers; make me a chain of copper weighing a hundred thousand *kantars*, and an iron cage each bar of which must be like a column; and then I will bring him to thee, otherwise nothing can be done.'

'I will gladly make for thee,' said the King, 'anything thou askest me.' And he takes him, and brings him to the palace, and at once gives orders to the Gypsies¹ to collect all the copper in the city for the chain. In a week all is ready. And the Monk takes the soldiers, the chain and

¹ The Gypsies are the chief metal-workers of the East.

the cage, and goes for the Wild Man; and after two or three months' time they arrive at the place where he was to be found. The soldiers immediately set to work and encircled the mountain with the chain, and took every precaution against his escaping at any spot. They did in fact everything the Monk told them. And about noontide they felt the mountain tremble, and from that they understood that the Wild Man was coming forth. They look this way and that, but see nothing; but when they look upwards, they see—my eyes!—they see coming down from the summit the Wild Man, a sight which made them tremble. But the Monk encouraged them.

‘Ah, my *pallikars*, let us seize the monster! Bring hither the chain!’ So then they took a little courage, and began to shout and drag the chain closer, and so approach him. But, as if he had wings, the Wild Man fled away, and so they could not entangle him. Not to make a long story of it, six months passed, and they had not yet caught him. But about the end of the sixth month the Wild Man became one day at last weary; and they entangle him

in the chain, and bind him, and put him in the cage.

Then the Monk says to them, 'Now, my boys, you may rest, for we have him safe!'

They take him and bring him to the King, and put the cage in the courtyard of the palace. You should have seen the King when they brought him! He made great rejoicings, and embraced the Monk, and kissed him tenderly, and said to him, 'What gift dost thou desire in return for the favour thou hast done me?'

'I want nothing,' he replied, 'but thy love.'

'No,' said the King to him, 'am I not able to reward thee?' And he took and gave him many royal gifts, and the Monk bade him adieu, and departed.

Let us return to the King. Sorrow and care had departed from him since the day on which they brought him the Wild Man, and he leapt for joy. In a short time, however, his grief returned, and you will see how.

Two weeks had not passed when one day the little Prince was standing on the steps of the palace, playing with a golden apple. As he

played, it slipped from his fingers, and rolled, and rolled, until it got inside the cage where was the Wild Man, and he picked it up. The boy runs to the cage and asks for his apple. And then, for the first time, the Wild Man speaks, and says to the Prince, 'If thou wilt take the key and open the door of the cage that I may take the air a little who have been so long imprisoned, then I will give thee thy golden apple.'

The Prince, like the child that he was, goes and takes the key from the guard-house without anyone seeing him, and opens the door; the Wild Man gives him back the apple, and then gives him a kick, and—if you see him, so do I!

In a short time the King comes, and as soon as he enters the courtyard, he goes to look at the Wild Man, as was his custom, for he was his consolation. And when he saw that the cage was open, and the Wild Man gone, he lost his senses, and drew his sword to kill the guard who kept the key. Just as he was going to cut off his head, this man cried, 'Sir King, you kill me unjustly, I have done no wrong! My Prince came and took the keys without my

knowledge, and went and opened the cage, and the Wild Man ran away.'

'Is that true?' asked the King, frantically.

'It is true, *Affendi!*'

So he left him and ran to kill his son. But the Queen, when she heard of it, seized the Prince in her arms, and cried, and besought the King—'In God's name, my King, do not such a thing as to kill your only son in your anger,' she cried, and much more. Then all the people in the palace fell at his feet, and 'Forbear, my King! Forbear!' they cried. 'Slay not our Prince!' And amid the cries and tears, here from the Queen, and there from the rest, the boy found means to escape. The King called and sought him, but his nurse had hidden him. After a while, when the King had become a little calmer, he made an oath, and said, 'Let him not appear before me, nor let mine eyes see him, for I will not leave life in him so long as I remember how much I spent to bring hither that Wild Man, and he to let him go! I cannot stomach it! Let the boy go so far away that I cannot hear of him, for he knows what will otherwise happen to him.'

The poor Queen, when she heard such hard words from the mouth of his father, seeks to make her son flee quickly, and goes at once to order him a pair of iron shoes, and puts in each one fifty gold pieces, takes whatever else is necessary for him, and carries them to the place where they had hidden him, and says to him, ‘My boy, as Fate has over-shadowed thee, and thou hast done such a deed; and as thy father has made a solemn oath to kill thee if ever again he set eyes on thee, thou must change thy name and thy dress, and go to live in a foreign land until we can see what turn things will take. And one thing only I beg of thee, that in whatever place thou bidest, thou wilt learn letters, because for that purpose I have put in thy shoes a hundred pieces of gold.’ And then she takes and strips him of his royal garments, and puts on him rustic clothes, gives him all that is necessary, and speeds him with her prayers and her blessing.

Let us now leave the King and the Queen to their sorrow, and follow the poor Prince, who took to the hills without knowing whither he went. He journeys one week, he journeys two, and in about

a month's time he comes upon a swineherd who was tending a thousand pigs.

‘Good day, swineherd!’ said he to him.

‘Well met, my lad, and what art thou seeking here?’

‘My fortune,’ replied the Prince. ‘I am a poor boy, and I have come out to find work so that I may earn my own living and help my parents.’

‘Ah, is that it? Eh, what sayest thou? Will thy bones hold good to look after these swine?’

‘*Bravo!*’ replies the Prince. ‘They will hold good.’

‘Then stay with me, for I am only fifteen days from the end of my time; and come with me in the evening to my master, and I will tell him that I am going away—for I am weary of this trade, and you can take my place.’

When God brought the evening, the pair of them took the pigs to the fold, where they found the master. When he saw the youth, he asked the herd, ‘What is the matter that thou hast brought this lad here with thee?’

‘Did I not tell thee that when my time was up I should go away? and thou saidst that I could

not go unless I brought another in my stead? Well, then, I have brought him!’

‘Very well,’ he replied, ‘let the fifteen days pass, and I will pay thee and thou mayst go about thy business. Only during these fifteen days thou must take him with thee and teach him where and when to go with the pigs, lest perchance he take them to some strange place, and we lose them.’

But the youth soon found his way into the hearts of his master and mistress. For whenever he went to the house he did not sit with crossed hands, but took at once the broom and swept, lighted the fire, and amused the children until one cried ‘*Tourou, Tourou!*’ and the other ‘*Niá! Niá!*’ and he did all the work of the house. In fifteen days he became a better herd than the first. And he brought good luck with him, too. For from the time that the other herd had left, the pigs were bursting with fat, not one got lost, not one fell lame, but they were just like young lions; and the master loved the boy from his heart, for, from the time he had come into the house, everything had prospered. And so well did he love him that he told him he would make him his son-in-law.

But the Prince remembered his mother's words and how she had told him to go on with his studies, and not to become a mere shepherd. So one evening when he returned home, he pretended to be very melancholy. His master, the apple of whose eye he was, observed his sadness and said, 'What ails thee that I see thee sad? If thou hast lost a pig, and art anxious, never mind! it matters not so that thou art well.'

'How shall I tell you, *Affendi*? It is not that, but I am melancholy because I must soon leave you. For I have received a letter saying that my mother is dying, and now I must go and receive her blessing.'

'Stay where thou art, my boy. Who knows if thou wilt find her living?'

'No, *Affendi*, you will give me leave to go and see my mother?'

'My boy, if thy longing is so great, thou art free to go; I will not detain thee.'

And with these wiles he deceived his master, who would not have otherwise allowed him to depart. So again he takes to the road, and tramps, and tramps, and after a time he comes to a town. As he was passing along a street he saw a shoe-

maker's shop, and stopped before the door. The master, seeing him, asked, 'What dost thou want, my boy?'

'What do I want? I am a poor lad, and want to learn a trade in order to live, and assist my family,' as he had said to the herd.

His reply was uttered in such a plaintive tone that the master had pity on him, and said, 'Eh, wouldst thou become a shoemaker?'

'Oh, that God may dispose thee to such an act of charity!'

'Come in then, my boy, for thou art the lucky fellow.'

And when he was come in, he saw a man polishing a pair of shoes. He seized the brush, and in a moment he had turned them into looking-glasses, while all in the shop wondered at his cleverness. The master then sent him to his house with a jar of water, and when he was come there—not to repeat it all over again—he did as he had done with his first master. And everybody was pleased with him, and he was even more beloved than he had been at the swineherd's house.

When two or three months had passed, and he

saw how fond they were of him, he said one day to the shoemaker, 'Master, I would ask you a favour!'

'Ask two, my boy,' was the reply, 'what is thy wish?'

'When, Master, I left home, I had learnt a little, but now I have nearly forgotten all I knew; and I shall remain half blind, for it is well said that "*they who are learned have four eyes.*" Perhaps you will say, "There is no need for thee to study, learn the trade!" and you will be right, Master. But my mother told me that, whatever trade I might learn, it would be necessary for me to have some schooling. And now I pray you, if possible, to find me a teacher, that I may do lessons but two hours a day, and the rest of the time I will work at my trade.'

'Very good, my dear boy,' was the reply.

As good luck would have it, his master knew a clever schoolmaster who was one of his customers. And the boy's good luck brought this man past the shop at the very moment they were talking.

So the master called, 'Schoolmaster! Schoolmaster! Come in! You will do me the favour to

give lessons to this youth two hours a day, and I shall be much obliged to you.'

'If anyone else had asked me, *Mástro*¹ Ghiorgi'—for this was the shoemaker's name—'I should have said "No"; but I cannot say that to *Mástro* Ghiorgi. Let him come at noon to my house, and I will examine him, and then I will do my best with him for the two hours, and it shall be as if he studied all day.'

So at noon, as the schoolmaster had said, the Prince goes to his house and asks him how much he must pay him for his lessons.

'*Bré*, my dear boy,' he replies, 'I see that thou art poor; what can I ask from thee?'

'But tell me though, for I can raise the money somehow and pay you.'

'What shall I say? My trouble may be worth some thirty or forty piastres. But I don't want to gain anything by thee—give me whatever thou conveniently canst.'

Then the boy took off his shoe, and took out of it the fifty sequins and gave them to the schoolmaster, who, when he saw them, smiled—for, as they say, '*What is given to Christ is received back*

¹ Or *mástore*, the Italian *maestro*.

again'—and he said, 'Never mind about the money, my boy, if thou pleasest me, I also will content thee.'

The disguised Prince then made the schoolmaster do his best; and in a short time he had finished his studies, and became a lamp of learning. And afterwards he hired another schoolmaster to whom he gave the other fifty sequins, to teach him mathematics; and at the same time he learned to make shoes well. At last the master wanted to make him a bridegroom—and, in short, he played him the same trick as he had played his former master. And again he takes to the hills and runs and runs, until he meets with a herd who was tending a thousand goats.

'Good day, my goatherd!'

'Welcome, my boy!'

And after they had exchanged a few words the goatherd goes away, and leaves him in charge of the goats. And the goats again, as formerly the pigs, prospered; none ever fell lame, or got lost out of his hand, and his master was delighted with him.

One day, as he was driving the goats home to the fold, one she-goat strayed away from the rest,



SHE WAS SO SWIFT THAT SHE WENT LIKE THE WIND.

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and as he was very unwilling to lose her, he followed after. She crossed one hill ridge, and stopped, and then another, and stopped, and the youth ran after her to catch her. Well, what are you expecting?—she crossed seven ridges, and finally stopped content; and when the youth approached her, there appeared before him the Wild Man who, when he had embraced and kissed him, exclaimed,

‘My Prince, for my sake thou hast suffered this adversity, and art become a shepherd and a shoemaker! But I have been ever near thee, that evil might not befall thee; and now I will make thee the greatest king upon earth! It was I who to-day enticed away the goat, that I might show myself to thee, and put an end to thy misfortunes. So sit thee down and rest thyself.’

‘No,’ replied the Prince, ‘I cannot. I must first take back the goat to my master, and then, if thou desire it, I will return, but now I cannot.’

‘Go, then, and come back quickly!’

So he takes the goat, and goes back, and finds the rest all together, and leads them to his master, and tells him that he cannot remain, as he has received tidings from his parents who bid him

come, for they are in trouble. And so he arose and went away to meet the Wild Man. And when he was come again to the same ridge the Wild Man appeared before him, and took off his old clothes, and dressed him in royal cloth of gold. He then showed the Prince a cave filled with sequins, and said to him,

‘Seest thou all that?—for thee have I kept it.’

Then he took him to another place where was a marble slab with an inscription upon it. And when the Wild Man had read aloud the inscription he removed the slab, and said to the Prince,

‘Now thou wilt descend three hundred steps, and when thou art at the bottom thou wilt see forty chambers, and in each one of them a Nereid. When thou hast entered the first chamber, the first Nereid will appear before thee, and her first words will be to ask thee to marry her. Thou must reply, “With all my heart, that is what I am come for!” and she will be pleased, and will bestow on thee a gift; and so thou must deceive them all, and when thou hast gained the forty gifts, escape and come back to me.’

So the Prince descended the three hundred steps, and when he came to the first chamber as

the Wild Man had said, the first Nereid immediately appeared, and asked him, 'What seekest thou? Wilt thou marry me?'

'Certainly, my lady,' he replied. 'It is for that I have come.'

Then she said, 'May'st thou shine like the sun!'

Then he goes to the next, and she says to him, 'May'st thou become a philosopher!' In a word, they endowed him with forty gifts.

Then he fled from them, remounted the three hundred steps, and returned to the Wild Man, who, when he saw him, said, 'Well done! Now we are all right, you only lack a beautiful wife. In the nearest city is a beautiful Princess who sets a task, and the task is this: She has a ring which is hung on the roof of the tower, and whoso is able to leap up and seize the ring, may marry her; but if he fails she cuts off his head. And already many Princes and Kings' sons have decorated the tower with their heads, and but one is wanting. So now let us go and fulfil this condition; and if perchance thou art afraid of the leap, do but jump upwards and I will give the ring into thine hand, and we will win the Princess. And give no heed to the people who, when they see such a youth as

thou art, will say, "For God's sake, leap not! Lose not so unjustly thy beautiful young life!" but do as I have told thee.'

Then he presented the Prince with a mare all golden from head to foot, and with trappings of diamonds—a wonder to behold; and she was so swift that she went like the wind. They mounted her, and, as soon as you could wink your eye, they found themselves outside that city, when the Wild Man disappeared, and the Prince was left alone. The people stared and knew not which to admire more, the mare or the Prince. When the Princess saw such a handsome youth, she lost her senses; and all prayed God that the Prince might win, and marry the Princess; and on the other hand they pitied his youth, and begged him not to attempt the task.

The Prince, however, heeded them not, but thought of what the Wild Man had said to him. And he hastened to the tower, all the crowd following him, weeping and crying, 'The poor Prince! Ah, the poor, dear Prince!' When he arrived at the tower, and saw how high it was, his courage failed; but he was ashamed to show it, and said within himself, 'Come, aid me

with thy prayers, my mother!’ And he took a leap, and found the ring in his hand.

Then was their lamentation changed into laughter and joy! And the King decreed that the wedding should take place that very evening. But the Wild Man presently came and said to the Prince, ‘Do not be married this evening, but betrothed only, for thy father has been dead six months, and another has come forward to claim the kingdom. On the morrow thou must set out, for there is no time to be lost.’

So the Prince told the King that he had such and such business on hand. Then he took the ring which he had won, and gave his own to the Princess; and when they had said farewell to each other, he went away. Mounting his mare, he was soon in his native country. But when he alighted at the palace gate and asked for his mother, the servants told him that since the death of the King of blessed memory, the Queen had covered herself with seven black veils, and would see no man.

‘And so,’ they added, ‘we cannot tell you where she is.’ (For how should they know,

poor things, after so many years, that he was the Prince?)

Then he begged them to let him go in because he had a secret to tell the Queen, which would do her good to learn. So earnestly did he plead with them that at last they relented, and went to tell the Queen. And when the Prince was led to the door of his mother's chamber, he rushed in and cried, 'Queen! I am thy son!'

But his mother, without seeing him at all, replied, 'Go, good youth, and good luck go with you! They drive me mad every hour with their news of my son!—"Your boy is found, and to-morrow he will be seen on the road!"'

'Am I not, mother mine, the Prince, whose father of blessed memory sent the Monk to find the Wild Man; and one day I was playing with the golden apple, and it fell into the cage, and I took the key and opened it, and the Wild Man escaped?'

'Those are things that have happened, my boy; and thou hast heard, and repeatest them.'

'Am I not he whom thou didst embrace and didst save from my father, and didst send to a

foreign land, because my father had made an oath to kill me?’

‘Those are things that have happened, my boy; and thou hast learnt, and repeatest them.’

‘Am I not that Prince into whose shoes thou didst put a hundred sequins that I might finish my studies?’

When the Queen heard these words, she cast off her black coverings, and threw herself on his neck, saying, ‘Thou art my son! O live, my Light! Thou hast come back safely! Thou art my Consolation!’ and much besides.

When it was known in the town that the real Prince had come back, the people ran to meet him, and made great rejoicings; and the Prince had no concern save for the grief of his mother, who was still sorrowing for the King. After a few days the Queen consented to go with him to fetch his bride, who, until he returned, was wasting like a candle, for she thought he did not love her. But when she heard that the Prince had arrived with his mother, she was like to burst with joy. And the King ran, and the Twelve ran, and small and great ran to welcome the Prince, and led them to the

palace. In due time they crowned the young couple with the wedding crowns, and again there was staring and wondering!

When the wedding ceremonies and the rejoicings at last came to an end, the Prince took his mother and the Princess, bade adieu to his father-in-law, and returned to his own kingdom. When they arrived, the Wild Man appeared, and told the Prince to give him fifty camels to bring away the treasure from the cave. And he loaded them with treasure, brought them back to the palace, and remained there himself. And the Prince at last began to enjoy his life.

But, look you, a time comes when the other kings learn that he has wealth and gear, and they envy him; and seven Kings and seven Princes come against him, and soldiers without number, to fight against him, and to take from him his towns, and his treasures, and his wife.

When the Prince heard this, he, too, began to prepare for war; but what could he do against so many soldiers? And so his heart quaked with the fear of losing his kingdom. Then the Wild Man said to him, 'Thou hast me, and yet

thou art afraid! And not only with regard to this matter, but whatever may happen, let it not even make thine ear sweat! For so long as the Wild Man lives, thou needest neither raise soldiers, nor do anything but amuse thy sweet one.'

So the Prince took courage, and troubled himself no more as to whether he was at war or not. And when his good Wild Man knew that the enemy had come quite close to the borders of his kingdom, he arose and went and fell upon them, first on this hand and then on the other, till he had destroyed them all. Then he took the seven Kings and the seven Princes, and bound them, and brought them before the Prince, and said, 'Here are thine enemies, do with them as thou wilt, my King!'

Then they began to weep, and to beg the Prince to spare their lives, and they would pay him tribute every year. Then the Prince had pity on them, and said, 'Be off then, I give you your lives! But truly ye shall, each one of you, pay me so much tribute every year.'

Then he released them, and they fell down and did homage to him as their overlord,

and each one went about his business. And so the Prince became, as the Wild Man had promised, the greatest King in the world, and feared no one. And so he lived happily, and more than happily. And we more happily still !

III

THE KING OF THE BIRDS

ONCE upon a time there was a King who had three daughters, and all three were exceedingly beautiful. One day messengers came from the King of a neighbouring country begging for help against enemies who had suddenly invaded his borders. As this King was a great friend of his, he was quite willing to go but did not like leaving his daughters, as they had no mother.

‘But never mind us, father dear,’ said the three, when he told them the news. ‘Our grandmother has just come to see us, and she will look after us. So go with an easy mind, and return soon, safe and victorious!’

‘Well, that is fortunate, for I must go at once. Now tell me, what shall I bring back for you all?’

Said the eldest, ‘Oh, bring me a pair of diamond ear-rings!’

Said the next, 'And I should like a diamond necklace!'

The youngest daughter had not spoken, so the King asked her, 'And you, Little Star, what shall I bring for you?'

'Let me think awhile, dear papa,' she answered, 'and I will tell you later.'

She goes to her grandmother's room, and says to her, 'Granny dear, father is going away to the war; what shall I ask him to bring back for me?'

'Ask him, dear child, to bring you the Melodious Napkin; say also that, should he forget it, *may his ship move neither forwards nor backwards.*'

So the Princess went to her father and said as her grandmother had bidden her. Then the King kissed and embraced his three daughters, and set out for the war. He came to the place where the enemy had their camp, fought against them, and drove them out of his neighbour's country. After having bought the ear-rings for the eldest Princess, the necklace for the second, and for the youngest, a spray of pearls and diamonds to wear in her hair, he went on board ship to return to his own country.

The anchor was weighed, the sails were set, but not an inch would the vessel budge from the shore. All were amazed, and knew not what to do. Among those on board there was, however, a merchant who had traded in many lands, and heard and seen many strange things ; and he went up to the King and said,

‘My long-lived King, perhaps some one laid a charge on you, and you have forgotten it?’

‘I don’t remember anything of the kind, I am sure,’ he replied.

‘But try and recollect, Sire, if some one of your household did not happen to charge you with a commission, and you have not fulfilled it.’

‘Ah! Now I remember!’ cried the King. ‘My youngest daughter begged me to bring her the Melodious Napkin, and said that, should I not bring it, *might my ship move neither forwards nor backwards.*’

Said the merchant, ‘With your permission, my King, I will go and buy it for you.’

So the King gave him money, and he got into a boat, went ashore, and bought it. As soon as the Napkin was on board, the wind whistled through

the rigging, the ship skimmed like a bird over the waters, and the King came again to his own country. The Princesses met him at the Palace door and kissed his hand, and to the eldest he gave the diamond ear-rings, to the second the necklace, and to the youngest, the pearl and diamond spray and the Melodious Napkin. She thanked her father, embraced and kissed him, went to her own chamber, and sent for her grandmother.

‘See, granny, my father has brought me the Melodious Napkin! Now, what shall I do with it?’

In the Princess’s inner chamber there was a high window, just under the ceiling. The grandmother placed a table under it, and a chair on that, climbed up, and broke with a key all the glass of the window. She then took out the broken pieces, fastened red velvet round the frame, and placed in the middle a golden bowl. When she had filled this with rose-water she said to the Princess,

‘When you wish him to come who is King of the birds, of the snakes, the insects, and the rest—and he is an eagle, this Prince—dip the Melodious

Napkin in the bowl and hang it to dry at the window. And when the eagle has flown into the room and flapped his wings he will change into a Prince. Do not be frightened, for this Prince will be your husband.'

When her grandmother had gone away, Little Star put on her most beautiful gown, fixed the pearl and diamond spray in her hair, dipped the Napkin in the bowl, and spread it out to dry. It gave out a strange singing sound, and presently she saw an eagle fly in at the window. When he had flapped his wings he changed into a handsome Prince.

'You called me, my lady, what do you want with me?' he asked.

The Princess blushed rosy-red. 'I did not know that you would come,' she said. 'It was my grandmother who told me to spread out the Napkin.'

The Prince was gazing at her all the time, for he had immediately fallen in love with the beautiful Princess. 'I am the King of all the birds and all the creeping things,' said he, 'and I shall be very happy if you will take me for your husband.'

‘I, too, love thee,’ replied the Princess, ‘and I would fain be thy wife; but I have two elder sisters, and I must wait to be married until they have found husbands, for that is the custom in our country.’

Then every day afterwards Little Star dipped the Napkin in the golden bowl, and spread it to dry; and every day the Prince came. So great was their love for each other that they could not be happy apart; and the Princess almost forgot that she had any sisters, and remained entirely in her own chamber. The other Princesses, however, soon began to wonder at this, and the elder said to the second,

‘Have you noticed that we hardly ever see Little Star since our father brought her the Melodious Napkin? What does she do in her chamber alone all day long?’

‘I wonder,’ replied the other. ‘Well, let us go and pay her a visit, and while I engage her in conversation, do you go into her inner chamber and see what is going on.’

So they said, and so they did. And while the one talked of this and that, the other went into the inner room as if to arrange her hair before the



HE WAS IN GREAT ANGER AND HELD HIS SWORD IN HIS HAND.

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mirror, looked on this side and that, but saw nothing unusual until she raised her head and caught sight of the high window with the velvet border and the golden bowl. Then she guessed that some one came in that way. She went back to the others, saying nothing of what she had seen; but both the elder Princesses reproached their sister for keeping away from them.

‘You cannot love us any more, or you would not act thus unkindly,’ they said.

‘You are mistaken,’ she replied, ‘I have not ceased to love you. But I am working at a large piece of embroidery for our grandmother. When it is finished you will see more of me.’

Well, to-morrow we are going to have a picnic, and we have come to ask you to join us,’ said the eldest Princess.

‘Thank you, I will come,’ replied Little Star, for she could not do otherwise.

As soon as they had left the chamber, the second Princess asked her sister what she had seen in the inner room. The eldest Princess told her, and then added,

‘Who comes in there and washes in that golden

bowl, I know not, but I will find out. To-morrow, as we are on our way to the picnic, I will say that I have forgotten my keys in my cupboard and will turn back to fetch them. Then I will put broken glass all round the high window, and we shall see what we shall see.'

Well, so she said, and so she did. The next morning, when all was ready, they sent to call their youngest sister, and all set off. When they had gone some distance, the eldest Princess suddenly cried out,

'O dear! What have I done!—I have left my keys in the cupboard door, and there is no knowing what may happen, for I have many valuable things of our father's in it. I must go back; but do you stay here, for I shall not be long.'

So she mounted her pony, and cantered back to the palace. Then, going straight to her youngest sister's room, she broke up some pieces of glass which she had brought in her jewelled snuff-box, and fastened them all round the window-frame where the velvet was. This done, she returned to her sisters. They ate and drank, chattered and laughed and sang, and towards evening mounted their ponies and returned home to the palace.

As soon as Little Star reached her room, she wetted the Napkin and hung it out to summon the Prince—for she could not bear to pass a whole day without seeing him, so much she loved him. Presently the eagle appeared, and was about to enter as usual, when he drew back, again flew forward, drew back once more, and flew away. The Princess could not think what was the matter. She placed the table and the chair under the window, and climbed up. Then she saw that the rose-water in the bowl was tinged with blood, and the velvet covered with broken glass.

‘Ah, what evil thing have my sisters done to me!’ she cried, and, running to her grandmother’s chamber, told her what had happened.

‘What shall I do now, grandmother dear, what shall I do?’ she asked, weeping.

‘Thou must set forth, if thou canst, and find out where is the palace of the King of the Birds.’

‘I can, and I will,’ she cried; and she begged her grandmother to get for her a nun’s dress so that she might set out alone to seek her beloved Prince. When the dress was brought, she put it on, tied up her hair and hid it under the cowl, and stained her

face so that it might not be seen that she was young and beautiful. With a rope round her waist and a crutched stick in her hand she then took to the road, and tramped, and tramped, and tramped, for many a weary hour. Tired and sad, she sate her down in the shade of a hollow tree, and presently saw, writhing towards her along the ground, a maimed snake, which went into the hollow where was her nest.

The little snakes then cried to her, ‘Where hast thou been so long, mother, for we are dying of hunger?’

‘Where have I been, my children? I have been on the roof of the palace; and I heard the lamentation and the wailing which is going on there because our Prince loved a wicked woman, and she has wounded him.’

‘Ah, little mother,’ said one of the snake-lings, ‘if they did but know, they would kill one of us, and anoint him in the bath with our fat, and he would be able to crawl like a wounded snake!’

‘Hush thee, my child, or some one may hear, and kill thee,’ cautioned the mother snake. ‘But now that you have eaten, stay quietly in the nest,

while I go again upon the tiles and learn how it fares with our King.'

Now the Princess had been learning from her lover the language of his subjects the birds and the creeping things; so, as soon as the maimed snake was gone, she lost no time, but taking one of the snakelings, she killed it with her crutch, put its fat in her snuff-box with some cotton-wool, and took to the road again. When she had gone a little way, she saw a pigeon come flying along and hide in a tree. She went near to listen.

'*Tsiou, tsiou!*' cried the young ones in the nest. 'Where have you been, little mother, and we dying of hunger?'

'Where have I been, my children? I have been to the King's palace, and have heard wailing and lamentation to rend the heart in pieces because our King is dying. He loved an accursed one, but she loved him not, and has set cruel men to wound him.'

'Ah, little mother, if they but knew, they would kill one of us, and anoint him with our fat in the bath. Then he would become a pigeon, and spread his wings.'

'Hush! never you mind,' said his mother;

‘go inside, or some one will hear and kill you, my children.’ And the pigeon flew away.

When the pigeon was gone, the Nun took her crutch, killed a fledgling, and took out its fat which she put in cotton-wool, and placed in her snuff-box, and went on her way. She went on, and on, and on, and then she saw an eagle coming from a distance and it disappeared into a leafy tree. She went near, listened, and heard an eagle say,

‘Where have you been, little mother mine, leaving us to die of hunger?’

‘Ah! and are you hungry when our King is dying?’

‘What ails our King?’

‘He loved a faithless one, and she has wounded him.’

‘Ah! little mother! if they but knew, and would kill one of us and take our fat, and anoint him with it in the bath, he would become an eagle and fly!’

‘Hush, my child, for fear some one might hear and kill thee,’ said the mother; and she flew off hastily to see how the King was.

When the eagle was gone, the Nun lost no

time, but killed one of the young eagles with her crutch, skinned it, took out its fat, put it in cotton, put it too in her snuff-box, and took the road which led to the palace. When she came near, she began to call out,

‘A physician and physic for the wounded, for sores, and every other pain!’

Up in the palace they were all weeping because the physicians had given the King up. Then a servant who heard her calling, ‘A physician! Physic!’ looked out of the window and said to the King’s mother,

‘My Queen! shall we call in that Nun, and see if she knows of anything for the King?’

‘Ah, dear thing, the royal physicians have given him up, and what should *she* do for him?’

‘Who knows, my Queen? sometimes one finds one’s health from small things. The Nun may cure the King.’

So they called the Nun, and she came upstairs. And when she saw the King she loved so dearly lying speechless and insensible on his bed, she nearly lost her wits; but she restrained herself and asked,

‘What do the doctors say about the King?’

‘They say there is no hope.’

‘Put your trust in me, and I will make him well,’ said the Nun.

‘Since the doctors have given him up, we leave him with thee; do as God shall enlighten thee.’

Then she bade them heat the Turkish bath, and when it was warm to put the Prince in it. When she had bathed him well, she rubbed him with a fragrant soap-jelly, took the snake’s fat and anointed his hands and all his body with it. The Nun-doctress then wrapped him carefully in a thick, soft bathgown, told them to carry him up to his bed, and sat by his side, and watched him all night. Sleep soon took the King who for so many days and nights had not slept.

Then said the King’s mother, ‘Ah! doctress dear, if my son gets well, I will be thy slave.’

The Prince slept all night, and in the morning he awoke and opened his eyes and saw his mother and the Nun by his side.

‘How art thou, my son?’ said his mother.

‘Well, little mother, I feel like a maimed serpent—I want to get up and crawl.’

Again the Nun told them to heat the bath. When it was ready she again washed him well with the fragrant soap-jelly, rubbed over him the pigeon’s fat, wrapped him up warmly, and put him to bed again. He slept all night, and when he awoke in the morning and his mother asked him: ‘How art thou, my son?’ he replied,

‘Like a pigeon, mother mine. I want to fly!’

They gave him food, and once more the Nun told them to heat the bath. This time she rubbed him with the eagle’s fat; wrapped him in a linen sheet, put him to bed, and he slept. In the morning, when he awoke, the Queen again asked him,

‘How art thou, my son?’

‘How am I? An eagle! I want to fly! Thou’—he turned and said to the Nun—‘thou art my saviour who has cured me; what favour shall I do thee?’

‘I want nothing, my Prince. I heal people for pleasure, and because my mother laid on me

this obligation. But one favour thou may'st do me. If thou hast anyone to hang or to slay, and he say to thee, "Long life to the doctress who healed thee and to the bloody shirt, and harm me not!" then thou must give him his life.'

The Prince hesitated a little, for he had intended when he got up to go and kill the Princess. But then he thought to himself, 'How should she ever know of my oath and say this to me?'

So he swore to her that he would do as she wished.

'And yet another favour I would ask,' said the Nun. 'Give me the bloody shirt and thy ring.'

The Prince willingly gave them to her. The Queen embraced, kissed and thanked her, and the Nun arose and went on her way.

As soon as she arrived at the palace she cleared the glass from the window frame, fastened again the velvet all round and put rose-water in the basin, dressed herself very beautifully, with the Prince's ring on her finger, and then dipped the Melodious Napkin in the rose-water, and

spread it out. But when the eagle was come in and had changed to a man she saw that he was in great anger and held his sword in his hand.

‘Art thou not yet satisfied, wicked one, but again callest me to kill me?’ he asked, and raised his sword to slay her.

But she smiled and said, ‘Long life to the doctress who healed thee, and to the bloody shirt, and harm me not!’

‘Ah, wretch!’ he cried, ‘and where hast thou learnt that?’

Then Little Star showed him also the ring, and told him that she had been the Nun who had healed him and that it was her sisters who had caused him that misfortune, for of course she could never have done it as she loved him better than her life. So they went together to her father, and the Prince asked if he might have Little Star for his wife. And her father rejoiced at his daughter’s good fortune, and they had music, and drums, and great festivities. The wedding took place soon afterwards, and while every one else rejoiced, her wicked sisters burst with rage and spite. The King of the Birds then became a golden eagle; and

he took hold of the bride with his claws and carried her away to his mother, and there again they held amusements and rejoicings and feastings. And they lived happily. And we more happily still !

IV

THRICE-NOBLE, OR THE THREE CITRONS

THIS is the beginning of the story. Good evening to the noble company !

Once upon a time there was a King and a Queen, and they had no son. They prayed to God to give them a child, and vowed that, if a child should be born to them, a fountain should run three days with oil, three days with honey, and three days with butter, that everybody might go and help himself. It was a lucky hour when they made the vow, and before a year had passed a son was born to the royal pair. Joy or grief, you may imagine which ! The boy grew up, and became a delight. But in their joy his parents forgot to fulfil their vow. And one night the Queen saw in her sleep a Woman who came and said to her,

‘I gave thee the child, but thou hast forgotten to keep thy vow. Knowest thou not that I can take again the child I gave thee ?’

The Queen arose in terror and said to her husband,

‘*Po-po!* what a risk we have run! We forgot to perform that which we vowed to God—that a fountain should run three days with oil, three days with honey, and three days with butter!’

The King immediately gave orders for a fountain with three mouths to be made in the courtyard of the palace, and told his people to carry to it honey, oil, and butter to put in the fountain that it might run, and everybody come and take and bless the Prince. When three days had passed, and all the people had helped themselves, and the fountain had almost ceased to flow, an old woman who lived at a distance chanced to hear of it, and she also went to the fountain in the early morning. She took with her a little pot and managed to find enough butter to fill it. The little Prince was watching her from a window of the palace, and when she had filled her pot, he threw a stone and broke it, and the butter was spilt on the ground. The old woman looked up, saw the little Prince laughing, and said,

‘Ah, my Prince, what hast thou done to me, a poor old woman! I would curse thee, did I

not pity thy youth. Now I will say only—*May'st thou not escape out of the hands of Thrice-Noble.*' And then the old woman hobbled away.

The Prince could not forget the words of the old woman, and as time went on he grew more and more puzzled as to who 'Thrice-Noble' might be, and often spoke of her to the Queen. Years passed, and when he came of age he said to his mother,

'Dear mother mine, I am going to travel and find out who is this "Thrice-Noble."'

His mother strove to dissuade him, but in vain; and when his parents saw how determined he was to go on this quest, they at last gave their consent. The Prince took a well-filled purse and his sword; and, throwing a cloak over his shoulders, he set off. On and on he went along the long road, asking all those he met by the way where was the dwelling of Thrice-Noble, but none could tell him. He came to the wilderness, and as he journeyed through it he arrived at a high, wide gateway, which stood open; and beyond it was a garden. Hoping to get directions here, our Prince entered; and, seeing a Lamia swinging on the branches of an almond-tree, he says to her,

‘Good day, my lady!’

‘Welcome, my lad! Had’st not wished me “Good day,” I should have devoured thee!’

‘Indeed,’ replied the Prince, coolly. ‘And if *you* had not wished *me* “Good day,” I would have run my sword through you!’

The Lamia laughed, and then asked, ‘Who art thou, and what seekest thou in this out-of-the-way place?’

‘I am a Prince, my lady, and many years ago an old woman laid upon me this curse—“*May’st thou not escape from the hands of Thrice-Noble,*” and I have always wanted to find out who she is. So be pleased to tell me, if you happen to know.’

‘I can tell you nothing, my boy; I never heard of a Thrice-Noble. But take that road to the right and presently you will come to another big gateway like mine, where my sister lives. Wish her “Good day,” and ask her if perchance she knows; if she does she will tell you, for she is good-natured.’ The Lamia then took a silver comb out of her long hair and gave it to the Prince, saying, ‘Take with thee this comb and give it to her with my greetings.’



IMMEDIATELY THERE LEAPED OUT A BEA PAUL MARRER

He took the silver comb, thanked the Lamia, and set off by the road she showed him. After walking for an hour or two he comes to another great gateway, enters, and sees within a Lamia swinging among the walnut leaves.

‘Good day, my lady,’ says he to her very politely.

‘Welcome, my boy! Had’st not wished me “Good day,” I should have devoured thee!’

‘Would you? Well, if you had not said “Welcome, my boy!” I would have run you through with my sword!’

‘What seekest, whence dost come, and who sent thee?’

‘Your sister sent me with this silver comb and her greetings; and I want to know where is the dwelling of “Thrice-Noble”?’

The Lamia shook her head, saying, ‘I know nothing about her. But go thou to my other sister who lives among those crags over yonder. Take the road to the left till thou come to an old tumble-down gateway; enter, and thou wilt find her wiping out the oven with her breasts. Say no word, but cut off a piece from thy cloak, wipe out the oven, put in her batch of bread, and, when

the loaves are baked, draw them out. Then ask her what thou wilt.'

Well, the Prince thanked her very civilly, and did as she had directed. When he had taken the loaves out of the oven and placed them in a row to cool, the third Lamia was very pleased with him, and asked,

'Whence comest, and what return desirest for the service thou hast done me?'

'My lady, your sisters have sent this iron comb by me, with their greetings; and I want you to tell me the way to the dwelling of Thrice-Noble.'

'Oh, my dear boy, I pity thy youth! The dwelling of Thrice-Noble is a palace of the Nereids. In the middle of the courtyard grows a Citron-tree bearing three Citrons, and in them are the Queens of the Nereids, three sisters; but the tree is guarded by two lions, exceedingly fierce. I can give thee a magical water which, when sprinkled on the palace gate, will cause it to open of itself. Thou must provide thyself with four carcasses. Throw these down at a little distance, and the lions will run to eat them. Then climb up the tree and pluck the Citrons. When you have plucked them, hold them safely in your robe, and

then throw the other two carcasses for the lions to eat while you get down, that they may not meddle with you; and I will see to the Nereids and bind them. But be careful when thou hast plucked the Citrons to cut them open in plenty of water, or the Queens will come out dead.'

So he did all that the Lamia bade him; he took four carcasses and followed the road she pointed out. He went on; he threw the water on the door; the door opened; he went in, and saw the Citron-tree. But when he was within, and the lions saw him, they began to roar. He threw one carcass as far as he could, and the other the same, and the lions rushed to eat them; and so he climbed up the tree. He drew his sword, cut the three Citrons, tied them up securely in his robe, threw the other two carcasses to the lions, came down, and made off. On the road, as he went, he said to himself,

'Perhaps there is nothing in the Citrons after all, and she has cheated me.'

He broke open one of the Citrons and saw inside a beautiful maiden, and she cried 'Water! Water!' and died, because he had no water to throw her into. Then he began to weep. He wept and

wept, and then buried her, took up the other two Citrons, and went on. As he went and went, he saw a little stream of water.

‘Shall I cut the other and see if there is anything inside?’ he asked himself.

Then he put the second Citron in the stream and cut it open, and there leaped out a lovely maiden. She also cried ‘Water! Water!’ and died, because there was not enough water to cover her. Again he wept much, and afterwards dug a grave and buried her too. Then as he arose and went towards the palace, he said to himself,

‘Unless I find a great deal of water, I will not cut open the other Citron.’

Presently he came to a great cistern full of water.

‘Here,’ said he, ‘I will cut the Citron, and see if there is anything inside or not.’

Then he put it into the water and broke it. Immediately there leaped out a beautiful maiden, more lovely than the others, and she swam about in the water, and cried,

‘How came I here? Where are my sisters?’

‘I brought no other Citron,’ he said, unwilling to distress her. ‘I brought one only, the others

I left on the tree. I am a Prince, and my Fate destined me to marry you, and you shall be a Queen.'

He wrapped her in his cloak, took her up, and carried her towards the city. Outside the city wall was a well, and close to the well grew a great cypress with spreading branches.

So he climbed with her up into the tree, hid her among the branches, and said,

'Stay here; don't feel at all dull; and I will go to the palace and bring you beautiful royal robes to wear, and a coach to ride in, as befits a Queen.'

He then set off and came to the palace. When his parents saw him they made great rejoicings, for they feared they had lost him. He told the King and Queen all his adventures, and how he had brought Thrice-Noble, and begged them to get ready clothes for her to wear, and a carriage to bring her to the palace.

While these were being got ready, and Thrice-Noble waited up in the tree, to the well below went a Negress to fill her pitcher with the bucket. When she saw Thrice-Noble's face reflected in the water, she drew up the bucket and said,

‘Dear me! Am I so beautiful? I shall do no more work now I know that I am such a beauty!’

She then began to dance round and round the well, crying, ‘So fair am I, and I knew it not! So fair am I, and I knew it not!’

But Thrice-Noble saw and heard all this, and burst out laughing up in the cypress; and the Negress looked up and saw her.

‘Ah! it is thou up there who mockest me!’ she said. ‘Come down at once!’

Said she, ‘Let me alone, I cannot come down, because the Prince has put me up here, and is coming to take me to the palace.’

Then said the Negress, ‘I don’t care about that; whether you will or not, down you come!’

So she climbs up into the tree, seizes Thrice-Noble and throws her into the well; then she undresses and wraps herself in the cloak, like Thrice-Noble, and sits up in the cypress. In a little while the King, the Queen, the Prince, and all the relations arrive. The Prince climbs up, and what does he see?—a black Crow!

‘How did you become like this?’ he asks, amazed.

‘Oh! from my grief,’ she said, ‘that thou wert

so long in coming, and I thought thou had'st abandoned me here! But what matter?—I shall grow soon white again now that thou hast returned. It is enough that thou love me and desire me.

Then the Prince was ashamed to show her to his parents; so he covered her up and put her in a carriage, drove to the palace, and hid her in a chamber. He ordered his food to be brought upstairs to him to eat with her, and paid her great attentions in order that she might grow white. But how could she grow white? And the Prince fell into great melancholy, and said to himself,

‘Have I hazarded my life and run such risks for a Negress? What shall I do if she does not grow white?’

A few days afterwards there went a maiden to draw water from the well into which Thrice-Noble had been thrown, and into her bucket leaped a golden Eel.

‘Ah! what a pretty Eel! I will take it to the Prince who is so sad, and perhaps his sadness will pass away when he amuses himself with this, for since he came back with his wife he is very low-spirited.’

So she left her pitcher at the well, took the

Eel as it was in the bucket, and carried it to the Prince. When she came to the palace, she asked to see the Prince wherever he might be. She had covered over the bucket with her kerchief and the Eel was not visible. They told the Prince that a maiden wanted to see him. Said the Prince,

‘Very well, let her come in.’

When the girl came in, she said, ‘My long-lived Prince, I found this Eel in the well there ; and I have brought it to you because it is so beautiful that it may amuse you.’

Then the Eel, when it saw the prince, began to leap and dance. It played many tricks, and began to nibble his hand. The Prince thanked the girl, gave her a handful of sequins out of his pocket, and she went away. The Prince remained all the rest of the day shut up in his own room ; he petted the Eel, threw it sugar, and gave orders for his meals to be brought to him there, so that he might look at the Eel, so much did he love it. The Negress did not see him at all, and sent word to him to go and visit her. The Prince went upstairs to see what she wanted ; she threw herself on his neck and embraced him, and wept, and said that he was very unkind, and now, just as she was beginning to

grow white, she had become black again, because she had heard that he was in love with an Eel. Then the Prince said,

‘I did not come because I did not wish to disturb you. Do you become white, and you will see what love I shall have for you. How should I love an Eel, as if it were a human being? I am only waiting for you to become white to hold our wedding.’

With such words he quieted her ; but every day there were fresh grumblings :

‘Kill the Eel for me to eat, and then I shall become white ; if you will not, take me back to where you found me.’

What could the Prince do, with the depths before him and the torrents behind? He decided to kill the Eel for her to eat, but he did it with the heart-ache. He ordered it to be killed, and cooked, and served for them to eat. As they ate it, all the bones that fell to her share she threw into the fire ; but he threw his portion into the garden. On the next day the Prince felt sad, and went into his chamber and wept. As he sat and wept, the gardener came to him and said,

‘My Prince, my long-lived one, will you come

down into the garden and see a marvel? A Lemon-tree has grown up during the night, covered at the same time with lemons and with blossoms. Will you come and see it, and tell me what wonder is this?’

The Prince went down to see the Lemon-tree. It immediately raised its branches and threw its blossoms all over him. Then the Prince called for a seat, and sat down under the tree, and did not move thence, so delighted with it was he. Presently the Negress asked where the Prince was. They told her thus and thus—‘There is a Lemon-tree covered with lemons and blossoms, and the Prince is fond of it, and sits beneath it.’ Our good Negress lost no time, and went down into the garden; but, as she approached the Prince, the Lemon-tree threw itself upon her with its thorns and scratched her face and her hands, and made a sight of her. She screamed and cried,

‘Root up the Lemon-tree, and then I shall become white!—for I was nearly white when this happened to me from the Lemon-tree, and now I have blackened and become like a Negress—or I will go away and bring the Nereids, and they will turn your palace upside down.’

‘*Bré!* my good woman,’ said the Prince, ‘what harm has the Lemon-tree done thee? It is a good tree; don’t go near it, that is all.’

He spoke in vain. Said she, ‘I will either root it up, or something dreadful shall happen.’

Then the Prince went out of the garden and said to her, ‘Do what you will, I shall not meddle.’

When the Prince was gone, she lost no time, but set the gardener to root up the Lemon-tree, cut the branches in small pieces, and threw them out on the road so that people might take and burn them. The stump only remained; and that they threw in front of the fountain. Presently an old man came to draw water. Said he,

‘Won’t you give me this stump that I may light a fire in my house?’

The Negress flies to the window.

‘Take it!’ she cries, ‘take it and go!’

So the old man shouldered the stump and went home. He took up his axe to chop it; but hardly had he struck it when he heard a voice from inside the wood:

‘Strike above, and strike below,
In the middle strike no blow;
It can feel, for ’tis a maid,
And thy blows pain sore her head.’

When the old man heard this, he gave a jump, and ran into his house in a fright. By and by his son comes to see him, and says,

‘Good day, Father!’

He made no reply, but sat trembling.

‘What ails you, Father, that you tremble?’

‘What ails me?’ he replied. ‘I went to the palace—where I wish I had not gone—for water, and found a stump and begged it; and it is alive and talks!’

‘Bah! How can it talk?—Can wood talk? You are surely going crazy, Father?’

‘Well, go thou near it, and take the axe and strike it very very gently, and thou wilt see that it talks.’

Then his son went and took the axe, struck the stump gently, and heard a voice say,

‘Strike above, and strike below,
In the middle strike no blow;
It can feel, for ’tis a maid,
And thy blows pain sore her head.’

Then the youth struck as she told him, and there leaped out from within the stump a beautiful maiden, who said to him,

‘Don’t be frightened, good youth, you are

making your fortune with me; only give me clothes to cover me, for I am naked, and buy me a white kerchief and thread of silk and gold that I may embroider a kerchief for you to take to the Prince, and he will give you many sequins.'

The youth went, as she desired him, into the city, and bought a beautiful white kerchief, with gold and silken thread, and brought them to her. And she sate her down and embroidered on the kerchief all her history: how she had become an Eel; how she had become a Lemon-tree; and that she was to be found in the old man's cottage where she awaited him. She folded the kerchief neatly, and begged the youth to take and give it into the hand of the Prince, and then come back to her with his answer. So he went with the gold-embroidered kerchief to the palace and asked,

'Where is the Prince? I want to see him.'

They brought him to the Prince, and when he had saluted him he said,

'My Prince, my long-lived one, I have a kerchief to deliver to you.'

The Prince took it, opened it. What did he

see? Letters! He read all the story of Thrice-Noble!

‘And where is now she who gave thee this kerchief?’ he asked of the youth.

‘At my father’s house.’

The Prince lost no time, but gave the youth a handful of sequins, and said to him,

‘Come with me, and let us go!’

Then the Prince took the youth, and they went to his father’s house, and there he saw Thrice-Noble. Rejoicings and tears; now they laughed, and now they wept. At last Thrice-Noble said,

‘Let us have no more of these troubles, but bring me clothes and a carriage, and let us go to the palace.’

‘I will send you dresses and a carriage,’ he replied, ‘but do you remain here until I drive out that Negress, and then I will come and fetch you.’

Then the Prince returned immediately to the palace, went up straight to the Negress, and began to pace up and down the room.

‘Are you again offended?’ she asks him. ‘What ails you again? Alas! No sooner do I begin to whiten a little than again you get

angry! Now offended, now one thing, now another; and I see you, and become blacker than ever!’

‘Never mind, for I shall soon leave you in peace. But I have now justice to do on a criminal, and I came here to consider and decide what punishment I shall give.’

‘Tell me about it, and I will advise you, for my papa was a King over the Nereids, and I shall know what you should do.’

‘There was a couple of lovers,’ said the Prince, ‘and he planned to separate them and kill the maiden. What punishment, therefore, shall I now give that man?—what ought he to suffer?’

‘And my papa had once such a case. And we had four wild mules, and they tied his two hands to two of the mules and his two feet to the other two, and whipped the four mules, and each mule took his own road, taking a piece with him.’

‘Then prepare,’ said he, ‘to receive thy punishment!’

‘What sayest thou? Am I for ever to be frightened? You will make me blacken again, and I shall die of grief!’

‘As to that, the game is played out; only I shall not bind thee to the mules, but strangle thee.’

And so he came out of the palace, and gave orders to his people to strangle her and throw her into the river. He then took a splendid gilt coach, and went with his mother to the poor man’s house, gave him much money and made him rich, and took home to his palace Thrice-Noble. The next day he ordered the ceremonies to begin, because he was going to celebrate his wedding. And then they had music and drums and great rejoicings. He took her for his wife, and they lived happily. And we more happily still!



A GREAT WHIRLWIND AROSE AND IT BORE HER AWAY WITH HER CHILD.
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V

THE NEREID

THIS is the beginning of the story—Good evening to your Excellencies!

There was once a King and a Queen, and they had an only son. As soon as he was grown up his father died, and the Queen and the Twelve Councillors were anxious that he should marry, as there were no other heirs to the throne. The young King was, however, very difficult to please. One beautiful Princess after another was proposed to him; but he would not even look at any one of them.

Now, in a small house near the royal palace there lived a widow who had three handsome daughters; and it occurred to the Queen that her son might be in love with one of them and unwilling to confess it. At last she made up her mind that this was really the case, and said to the mother of the girls,

‘Will you not send one of your daughters to me at the palace to keep me company?’

‘Certainly, my Queen, with pleasure,’ she replied.

So she dressed her eldest daughter in her best gown, and took her in the afternoon to the palace. The Queen received her kindly, took her by the hand, and led her to the King’s chamber where she left her, saying,

‘I have brought thee here, my girl, because my son does not wish to marry, and to see if perchance he is in love with any one of you three. If the King tells thee that he loves thee, I will make thee my daughter-in-law.’

So the girl sat on the sofa, and worked at her embroidery till the evening. When the King came in, however, he took not the slightest notice of her, but sat down at his table to write, and when he had finished writing, he rose and went away. Sleep presently took her, and she lay on the sofa and slept.

In the morning the Queen went to see how the maiden had fared, and asked her what the King had said to her.

‘What can I tell you, my long-lived Queen?’

replied the girl. 'The King neither spoke to me nor looked at me, but sat down and wrote, and soon went away.'

The Queen thanked her, gave her a beautiful ring, and begged her to send her sister to the palace. The maiden returned home and gave her mother the Queen's message. So they arrayed the second daughter in her best gown, and her mother led her to the palace. The Queen greeted her very kindly, led her also to the King's apartment, and left her, saying,

'If my son tells thee that he loves thee, thou shalt be my daughter-in-law.'

So, like the other, she seated herself on the sofa, to wait for the King. But when he came home in the evening, he merely sat down to write, and left again without once raising his eyes to glance at her. And when, in the morning, the Queen went to learn what her son had said, the girl could only reply that he had not even looked at her. So, with a fine new ring on her finger, she too returned home, bearing to her mother the Queen's compliments and the request that her youngest daughter might be sent to the palace.

Now the youngest daughter, Ianthé, was not

only more beautiful than the others, but much more clever and wideawake; and she had also fallen deeply in love with the handsome young King. When she arrived at the palace the Queen took a great fancy to her, and thought she would like best to have this maiden for her daughter-in-law. So she changed the girl's dress for a handsome royal robe, decked her with her own jewels, led her to the King's apartments, and instructed her how to act. As she sat there on the sofa alone, she began to look about her and think what she could do to attract the King's attention when he should come in. Hanging outside the window was a singing-bird in a gilded cage, and near the sofa stood a splendid candelabra holding dozens of wax candles. She brought the cage inside and placed it on a stool close by, and waited.

Presently the young King came in as usual, sat down, and began to write, taking no notice of Ianthe. Then she, addressing the bird, said,

‘Good evening, pretty little Birdie, won't you talk to me?—or you, my little Cage?—or you, my golden Candlestick, won't you chat with me?’

Then said the King, without looking up, ‘My

Candlestick, my Candlestick, at your orders, my Candlestick.'

She was ashamed, and said no more; and after a while, when he had finished his writing, the King rose and went away. In the morning the Queen went to ask if her son had spoken to the girl, and what he had said.

'When he came in,' said Ianthé, 'he wished me "Good evening"; and afterwards he asked me who had brought me to his room, and I told him that the Queen had told me to come and keep him company.'

Then the Queen begged her to remain another day. In the evening she again talked to the Candlestick, and he again answered to the Candlestick; and when he had written and written, he rose and went away. Her sisters expected her on the following day to have returned home; but when they found that she did not come, they went themselves to the palace. There they saw her sitting beside the Queen, and both the Queen and she were in very good spirits. When they bade her come home with them, and not outstay her welcome, she replied,

'But the Queen will not allow me to come.'

‘What? Has the King spoken to thee?’ asked her sisters in surprise.

‘Yes, indeed! we have had a great deal of talk together!’

Then the two sisters were poisoned with jealousy, and they rose and went away. As they left the palace, said the one to the other,

‘My dear, I don’t believe that the King has spoken to her at all. She likes very well to remain at the palace, and is telling lies. But we can easily make sure. We will take to her those pearls which the pedlar-woman is selling, for her to buy, and we will see what she will do.’

So the next day they took the pearls from the pedlar-woman’s hand, went to the palace, and said to their sister,

‘These beautiful pearls are for sale; ask the King to buy them for thee.’

She said, ‘Leave them, and I will ask him if he wishes to buy them for me.’

They left the pearls, and arose and went away. On the road as they went they said, ‘We shall see how she will manage it, who will buy the pearls for her!’

When the King came in the evening, she again

pretended to talk to the Candlestick. ‘My Candlestick, my Candlestick!’ she cried.

Said he, ‘At your orders, my Candlestick!’

‘My sisters have brought these pearls for me to buy. Shall I buy them, or shall I not?’

‘My Candlestick, my Candlestick, the keys are in the cupboard, the sequins are in the drawer, open and take what thou wilt!’ replied the King.

Then he sat down to his writing, and, after a while, went away as usual.

In the morning the girl told the Queen that the King had given her money to buy anything she liked. Then the Queen embraced her, kissed her, and said, ‘Thou shalt be my daughter!’ When her sisters came, she asked them how much the pedlar-woman wanted for the pearls, and gave them the money. As they went away their noses dropped venom; but still they refused to believe that the King had spoken to her.

‘Don’t believe it; she is a cunning baggage; the Queen must have bought them for her! We will take her now a pair of bracelets, and see if she will buy them too.’

The next day, accordingly, they took a pair of bracelets, which the pedlar-woman had for sale, and

offered them to her ; and she again used the same means to get the King to buy them for her. When, on the morrow, the sisters went for the money, they said to her,

‘If you really are now a Queen, you ought to invite us to dinner that we may see the bridegroom, our brother-in-law.’

‘I will speak to him about it in the evening when he returns,’ she replied, ‘and if he is willing, why not?’

When they had left, their little sister went back to the King’s chamber and wept bitter tears. ‘What is this,’ she cried—‘my sisters, whom I have always loved, now fall upon me like Lamias and worse, as though they would devour me!’ And in the evening, when the King came in to write, she was still crying and sobbing, and he heard her.

‘Come here, my dear Candlestick,’ said he. ‘What ails you that you grieve thus?’

‘My sisters wish me to invite them to table, O my King ; but I have no authority here, and I am in despair, and so I weep!’

‘My Candlestick, my golden Candlestick,’ replied the youth, ‘the cooks are below and the hunters are below ; geese and ducks there are, too,

in the yard in plenty. Let them kill, and prepare thy table.' And he went away.

In the morning she crossed her arms on her breast, went to the Queen, and said to her,

'My Queen, the King has ordered me to spread a table and invite my sisters to dinner. And he says that the cooks and the hunters are below, and there are geese and ducks in plenty, and I am to order what I please. Will you give orders to the people, my Queen?'

'Since the King has said so, call the people yourself and give them orders,' replied the Queen.

So she called the hunters, and ordered them to go hunting; she called the cooks, and told them to kill ducks and geese and fowls, and prepare them for the next day, as she was going to give a dinner to her sisters. She was so lovely and sweet that all in the palace were her slaves and ready to do her pleasure. She then called the groom and told him that the King did not wish to sit down with her sisters at table, and bade him help her to play a trick on them. About noon, at the time when they would be sitting down to table, and expecting the King to come and eat with them, he was to bring out the King's horse to the ruined back-gate

of the courtyard, and cause him to make a great clatter with his hoofs on the stones so that it might be heard upstairs, and then to send a servant in haste to say,

‘Run downstairs, Little Queen, for the King wants to speak to you!’

So it fell out. The next day the sisters came to dine, and the Queen-Mother was delighted at dining again with her son after eating alone for so long a time; but the sisters smiled maliciously, because they believed it was all fables. While they waited, Ianthe went from time to time to the window to see why the King was so late in coming. When the sound of a horse’s hoofs galloping on all fours in the courtyard was presently heard, they both grew yellow with jealousy, but the youngest blushed. Then a servant came in hastily, and said,

‘Come downstairs, Little Queen, for the King wants you!’

Ianthe ran downstairs, and sped her to a place far away where was a cloister; and while she was walking there weeping and not knowing what to do next, she trod on a slab which moved under her feet. She raised the slab and saw a staircase.

She went down many steps, down and down, and when she came to the bottom walked on and on till she saw a lonely shed heaped full of thistles. Upon the thistles lay the King asleep, and near him slept a Nereid, and by her side a child. Then she lost no time, but ran off back to the palace, called the Queen out and told her that the King could not come to dine with them, but desired her to send him two gold-embroidered veils, one rose-coloured and one white, a silver comb, and a gold-embroidered coverlet of silk for a child's cradle,¹ as a friend's wife had given birth, and he wished to offer them as presents. When the Queen had brought them, the girl begged her to go and begin dinner, and she would come when she had taken the things to the King, as he had bidden her to return alone with them.

So she took the gifts and went downstairs; returned to the stone which moved, descended the steps and, softly, softly, approached the Nereid. Spreading the golden coverlet on the ground, she lifted the child and laid him on it, picked the thistles out of his hair, combed it, and covered

¹ All the articles above-mentioned refer to Turkish usages at the birth of a child.

him with the rose-coloured scarf. She cleared the Nereid's hair also of the thistles of which it was full, covered her and the King together with the white veil, and then went back to the palace and sat down to table with the Queen-Mother and her sisters.

When the Nereid woke up and saw herself and her child thus cared for, and without thistles in their hair, she turned and said to the King,

‘Who is she that has come and has done this thing to us here?’

Then he swore to her—‘*by the sparks of the fire*’—that he had seen no woman, and said,

‘Thou knowest well that thou hast taken the light out of mine eyes, and that I see no woman but thyself!’ And he related to her how he heard every evening in his chamber a woman talking to the Candlestick, but saw her not. Then she gave him a slap and said,

‘I strike thee thus that thy light may come again; but I charge thee on thine oath to take none other than her to wife.’

The Nereid then clapped her hands, and a great whirlwind arose, like that which had carried away the King one noontide when he was out hunting,

and it bore her away with her child and the bed of thistles, and they disappeared. And out of the whirlwind he heard a voice which said, 'I leave farewell to thee! Thou wilt never see me again, neither me nor the child!'

It was about mid-day that this happened, and the King grieved for her until evening. He then went up to his chamber, and seeing a beautiful girl seated there in tears, he embraced her, saying, 'Let your tears be dried; neither you must say what you saw, nor I what I know; let us forget the past. You have delivered me from the spell of the Nereid. And now let us go and kiss my mother's hand, and to-morrow we will hold our wedding.' And he led her to his mother.

The next day was heard everywhere the sound of music, the beating of drums, and great rejoicings; and the wedding was celebrated to the joy of everybody except the young Queen's envious sisters.

VI

THE TOWER OF THE FORTY DHRAKOS AND THE KING OF THE GOLDEN APPLE

THERE was once an old woman who had an only son named Phiáka. He was an idle sort of fellow, and had learnt no trade. One day he was eating bread and caroub honey for his dinner when a swarm of flies gathered round and worried him. He struck out at them with his left hand and killed fifty, and then with his right and with one slap killed a hundred. ‘What a valiant fellow I must be,’ he said to himself. ‘I had no idea I was so strong. I’ll ask my mother, as she is weary of seeing me sit idle here, to buy me a horse, a suit of soldier’s clothes, a tent and sword, a spear and shield, and a bow and arrows, and I will hie me to the wars.’

So he thought, and so he said to his mother; and the old woman, in order to disburden herself of him, did all he asked her. In a few days,

when she had prepared everything, she said to her son,

‘All is ready, and may God and my blessing be thy help.’

The youth donned the clothes, took his new arms, kissed his mother’s hand, mounted, and bade her good-bye. At whatever place he stopped, when he dismounted, he tied up his horse and pitched his tent, and when he had supped or dined, he set off again. After about three months’ journeying he came to a forest, on the borders of which was a castle. When he came near the castle, he found a stone water-course full of running water. The water in this channel emptied itself into a cistern, and the cistern watered a large garden. Close by was a great plane-tree. The youth dismounted, tied up his horse and pitched his tent. He dipped his biscuit in the running water and ate it, together with a piece of cheese which he had with him; and when he had eaten, he lay down to sleep.

The lords of the castle were forty Dhrakos, and they had a very beautiful sister. At noon they, too, came to the castle, and when they

saw the tent set up under the plane-tree, they sent their youngest brother to see what stranger had surprised them. In a little while the youngest brother came back and said it was a youth, and he was sleeping like one dead.

‘That’s lucky,’ said one of the forty, ‘we shall sup finely to-night!’

‘Never!’ cried another; ‘it would be dishonourable to kill him while he sleeps. We must first awaken him, and fight him one by one.’

‘No,’ replied the eldest brother, ‘that will not do either, for one to fight against forty; but we will kill him if we beat him at feats.’

‘Very well,’ said all the brothers, and they agreed to abide by the counsel of the eldest.

Presently the youth awoke, drank of the water, saw to his horse, and was preparing to set off again when he saw coming towards his tent a great number of tall, stout men who, as they came nearer, he found to be Dhrakos. Immediately, without showing any fear, he girded on his sword and rolled up the mattress on which he had been sleeping. When the Dhrakos came up to the tent, they glanced at it and saw written

all around it—‘Fifty with the left hand, and a hundred with the right, and woe if I arise!’

The Dhrakos exchanged looks, and bit their lips. Then the eldest of them said to the youth,

‘Hero, thou hast come without our leave and taken up thy abode in our country, thou only knowest why. We have come to tell thee that if thou canst play at ball as we play, we will marry thee to our sister.’

‘I agree,’ said the youth.

Then the youngest Dhrako threw the ball, and it crossed the river; the others threw, and it fell still farther away; the eldest threw, and it went down five hundred steps.

‘Now it is my turn!’ cried the youth; and he threw it with such force that it flew as far as the mountains.

‘Our word is our word,’ said the eldest Dhrako; ‘the wedding shall be held in three days; but we must first go out hunting in order to have game for the wedding-feast.’

‘Just as you please,’ replied the youth.

The next day the Dhrakos invited the youth to go out hunting with them. The road they took brought them to a place at which forty-one

roads met. The hunters had been on all the forty, but on the other nobody now went; for of those who had been bold enough to go along that road not one had ever come back. So the Dhrakos knew the place, and when they came to where the roads met, they said,

‘Let us all put our rings under a stone, and each take a different road. As we come back from the chase, let each go to the stone and take his ring, and then return to the castle.’

They did so, and the Dhrakos took the accustomed roads, and let the youth take the evil road.

Well, come along! The youth went on till he came to the edge of a reed-swamp. There he heard a great hissing which came from among the reeds, and as the noise grew louder he saw an enormous three-headed serpent coming towards him. The youth fixed an arrow in his bow, shot at the serpent, and wounded it in the stomach, and it began to writhe, and wriggle, and roar. The youth immediately drew his sword and cut off, one by one, the three heads of the serpent. He then set fire to the reed-swamp and burnt it, together with the serpent, and set off again back to the stone.

The Dhrakos had not yet returned, so he sat down to wait for them. When they came back, he showed them the heads of the serpent, and told them all the story. Then they all took their rings from under the stone, and returned to the castle.

The next morning the Dhrakos told the bridegroom that they must invite their King to the wedding, for he would be offended if he heard from others that they had married their sister without inviting him.

‘Very well,’ said the youth, ‘do as you think proper.’

So the eldest Dhrako set off to bear the invitation on the part of his brothers. The King received him well, and asked him about the bridegroom, what kind of man he was.

‘He is a valiant hero,’ replied the Dhrako. ‘When he was in his own country he slew fifty with his left hand and a hundred with his right; and us forty brothers he beat at throwing the ball. And on the road along which if the people of these parts go they never return, he went, and killed the three-headed serpent.’

‘As you say he is such a hero,’ said the King,

‘he is no doubt able to kill also the wild boar, Kaláthas, which ravages our country, and against which I have so often sent my most valiant Dhrakos, but they could not slay it.’

‘He is able,’ replied the Dhrako, ‘but not one of my brothers is bold enough to accompany him for this purpose.’

‘Never mind,’ said the King, ‘when the wedding is over, I will write to you, threatening to slay you if you do not my bidding; and if he loves your sister, he will, for her sake, be obliged to help you.’

For the King had heard that the Dhrakos’ sister was very beautiful, and he was jealous that he had not got her in his own castle. So he gave the Dhrako some presents for his brother-in-law and for his sister; and when the forty days of the wedding were passed, he wrote to the Dhrakos commanding them to go and bring him the wild boar, Kaláthas, dead or alive. When the Dhrakos heard this, they were much put out, and told their sister. She promised them, however, that when her husband came home in the evening from the chase, she would beg him to help them. Then the Dhrakos were much comforted, and they went about their usual work in the garden—one to

water, another to dig, another to prune, another to chop wood from the forest, another to carry it to the castle, and the rest to do other work.

When evening came, and the youth returned from hunting, his wife made him promise that he would help her brothers to the best of his ability. The next day, accordingly, he invited his brothers-in-law, and asked them to get ready and go boar-hunting with him. So they took each one his horse, his bow, plenty of arrows, and their spears, and set out.

It was near noon when our hunters arrived on the shore of a lake, and there they dismounted to stretch themselves and rest a little while in the shade. Presently they heard a crashing and a horrible noise coming from among the bulrushes—it was the wild boar. The youth fixed his arrow, shot it, and pierced the wild boar in the eye. Kaláthas, mad with pain, roared at the hunters; but as he came nearer, the youth struck him with his spear on the forehead with such force that Kaláthas reeled and fell to the earth. Then the youth fell upon him and cut off his head, which he gave to his brothers-in-law that they might present it to their King.

When the King of the Dhrakos received the head of Kaláthas, and learnt from them that their sister's husband had killed it, he outwardly professed great love for him, and sent him presents; but he sent secretly an old woman to inquire about his strength. The old woman came to the Dhrakos' castle, and, passing herself off as a nun, she found an opportunity to speak to the young wife, from whom she learnt that her husband had boasted to her one night that if the earth had a ring fixed to it, and he somewhere else to stand upon, he could lift the earth with all its weight.

'Thy husband need not boast so much,' said the old woman, 'for in our parts there is a famous champion called Yíaso, and he will be stronger than your husband.'

At night, when the youth came home from hunting, his wife, as they talked together, repeated to him the words of the old woman; and when he heard them, he thought to himself that it would be well to seek that champion and make his acquaintance. God dawned the day, and the youth, before going out to hunt, buckled on his shield, said good-bye to his wife, and told her that it would be a few days before he returned, but that she must

not be at all anxious. He mounted and set off, and at whatever town or village he passed through, he asked the people if they knew Yiáso the champion. Not to make a long story of it, after a month's journeying he came to a town, and on inquiring there he heard to his joy that Yiáso lived in that town.

‘Good!’ said he. ‘Now I shall see him,’ and he began at once to seek him. At last he found him in a cookshop.

‘Art thou Yiáso?’ asked our hero.

‘Certainly,’ replied Yiáso, ‘but who art thou?’

‘I am Phiáka,’ said the youth, ‘the brother-in-law of the Forty Dhrakos, and the slayer of the three-headed serpent.’

‘And of Kaláthas the wild boar?’ asked Yiáso.

‘Yes,’ replied the youth.

‘Then, my friend Phiáka, if thou art he, let us make trial of each other's prowess.’

‘Whenever you like,’ said he.

‘My trials are these,’ said Yiáso—‘if thou raise my strength-test higher than I, and if, with the first blow on the shoulder thou drive me the deeper in the earth, thou shalt be my master, otherwise I shall be thine.’

‘Very good,’ replied the youth.

Then Yiáso took him to his house, seized hold of the strength-test, and raised it as high as his knee. Afterwards he gave his friend a blow on the shoulder, which drove him up to his knees in the earth. Then the youth took up the strength-test, which was a barrel, as big as a hogshead, full of lead, and he raised it as high as his chest; he gave Yiáso a blow on the shoulder, and he sank into the earth up to his armpits.

‘Well done, my Phiáka!’ cried Yiáso. ‘From this time forward thou art my master! Bid me do what thou wilt, and I will obey thee.’

‘Then follow me,’ said the youth.

‘With pleasure,’ replied Yiáso; and they rode together and came to the Castle of the Forty Dhrakos. They were all together at home when he arrived; and the Dhrakos, when they saw their brother-in-law, made great rejoicing.

At night his wife told him that, five or six days previously, the King of the Dhrakos had sent word to her brothers to tell their brother-in-law to go and fetch for him a bottle of the Water of Life. When the youth heard these words, he was much disturbed; and on the following morning

he repeated them to Yiáso, who remarked that in his country there was a man called Ear of the Earth. 'And he will know how to advise us about what thou hast told me,' said he. 'So if thou wilt give me a horse, I will go and bring him; he is my friend, and I think he will do me the favour to come.'

The youth gave Yiáso permission to go, and they got ready for him a splendid horse, one of the swiftest. At break of day he set out, and after forty days Yiáso returned to the Dhrakos' Castle with Ear of the Earth. He was a very outlandish man with long, donkey's ears, but he had the power of hearing with them what men were talking about in every part of the world, and whoever wanted to know anything, he could tell them. And he told the youth that the Well of the Water of Life was away in the farthest East, between two mountains which opened and shut, and that a Dhrako guarded the place when the mountains were open. Whoever would obtain this water must take a skin of Koumantarkán wine¹ to treat the Dhrako with, so that he might not only leave them free entrance, but might also hold the

¹ The choicest wine of Cyprus, made in the south of the island.

mountains apart with his two hands until they came back from the Well.

When the youth had listened to this man's words, he begged him to go with them for good or for evil. So they made ready for the journey, and in five days' time they took the road. The youth bade farewell to his wife and to the Dhrakos, whom he charged to take care of their sister, and keep her from all harm; and then he went off with the others, all three mounted on swift horses.

Well, on their journey they had passed through many countries, and were far away, when one night Ear of the Earth said to his companions,

‘I hear the snoring of the Dhrako who guards the Well of the Water of Life; he must be asleep.’

Some days passed, and Ear of the Earth again said to his companions,

‘I hear the Dhrako complain that since the time when King Alexander¹ came for the Water of Life, he has not tasted wine. I hope that in a few days more we shall arrive there, and present him with some.’

¹ According to Oriental legend, Alexander, though he is said to have wandered long in ‘The Land of Darkness,’ seeking for this Water of Life, failed to find it.

The land through which they were passing had no inhabitants, but was a wilderness. Said Ear of the Earth to them on the following day,

‘We are coming near; the snoring of the Dhrako sounds in my ears; and I believe the mountain in front of us is that which opens and shuts.’

At last they arrived, and found the Dhrako sitting under a plane-tree. When he saw the strangers, he asked them what they wanted.

‘A little water,’ replied the youth, ‘from the Well of Life.’

‘But, my *pallikar*,’ said the Dhrako, ‘this mountain where the Well of Life is opens and shuts. I don’t believe thou wilt be able to fill thy bottle in time, and thou wilt be shut in. Thy companions are not, so far as I can see, able to hold open the mountain while thou fillest it.’

‘But the great Dhrako, your Honour,—if he is so disposed to do us the favour,—can’t he hold it open?’ asked the youth.

‘I am strong only when I drink,’ replied the Dhrako.

‘But I see you have plenty of water here?’ said the youth.

‘But my thirst is not to be quenched with water,’ replied the Dhrako; ‘it is something else which gives me strength.’

‘Perhaps you want wine?’ said the youth.

‘Thou hast guessed it,’ replied the Dhrako.

‘Well, we have with us a skin of wine,’ said the youth, ‘at your Honour’s service.’

The Dhrako’s eyes sparkled with pleasure. When he had drunk of the choice Cypriot, he said, ‘Wait a little.’ And when the mountain opened, the Dhrako stretched out his arms and kept the two sides apart until Phiáka had filled his bottle at the Well. The youth and his companions then thanked the Dhrako, told him that all the wine in the skin was his, bade him farewell, and set off. The Dhrako was so pleased at receiving the wine that he took three horse-tail hairs and gave them to our hero, saying to him,

‘Shouldst thou ever be in danger, strike these three hairs lightly, the black, the white, and the red, and immediately we three brothers—I who guard the Well of Life, my brother who guards the Red Apple-Tree with the Golden Apples, and my third brother who keeps the Souls at the mouth of Hades, will come to thy aid.’

The youth again thanked the Dhrako, took the three hairs, and hastened to return to the castle. As they went, Ear of the Earth said one day to Phiáka,

‘Master, thy castle is surrounded by three hundred Dhrakos; and thy brothers-in-law are fighting against them from within the castle.’

The youth changed colour at this news. When they were still two days’ journey from the castle, said Ear of the Earth again,

‘Master, ten of thy brothers-in-law are killed, and five wounded!’

The youth sighed, and made still more haste to arrive. At last they saw the castle from afar. The youth was about to strike the hairs which the Dhrako had given him, in order to seek his aid, when they heard shouts, first from within the castle and then from those who were outside, who ran and fled. And when Phiáka and his companions were come to the castle, they learnt that the shouts they had heard from within were shouts of joy from his brothers-in-law because they saw him coming, and those from without were cries of dismay from the besiegers when they learnt that the brother-in-law of the Dhrakos had

arrived. Then the youth sprinkled his dead and wounded brothers-in-law with the water from the Well of Life, and made them whole; and that day they remained together and feasted in the castle garden.

After a few days, Ear of the Earth said to the youth,

‘I hear the tramp of many soldiers coming towards our castle. It is the army of the King of the Dhrakos who wants to take away your wife from you; what shall we do?’

‘Are you quite sure of what you say?’ asked the youth.

‘Quite sure,’ replied Ear of the Earth.

‘Then I must strike the hairs,’ said the youth, ‘as soon as the soldiers appear before the castle.’

Three days afterwards the castle grounds were full of soldiers. One body set up their tents in the direction of the garden, another towards the forest, and another out by the river in the corn-fields. The youth struck the horses’ hairs and awaited succour. Twenty-four hours had not passed after he struck the hairs when a white cloud appeared in the East, and a warrior mounted on a Fish-horse descended on the castle, holding in

his hand a bottle of water from the Well of Life. When he had dismounted, there appeared a red cloud from the West, and a warrior mounted on a red horse alighted on the tower, and he bore in a box a Golden Apple. It was the Dhrako-guardian of the Red Apple-Tree. When he, too, had dismounted, there appeared a black cloud from the South, and a warrior mounted on a black steed descended on the castle, and he held a sword shaped like a sickle. It was the Dhrako-guardian of Hades. When all three were arrived and had rested, they resolved to begin the battle. The Dhrako of the Well of Life undertook to fight with the body by the river; the Dhrako of the Red Apple-Tree with the body in the forest; and the Dhrako of Hades with the body in the garden, where the King of the Dhrakos was.

In the evening, then, when it grew dark, the Dhrako of the Well of Life turned the river into the fields where the besiegers were encamped, and those of them who were not drowned fled away; the Dhrako-guardian of the Red Apple-Tree set the forest on fire near the second body of the enemy, and some were burnt, and all the rest fled; while the Dhrako-guardian of Hades fell upon the

soldiers who were in the garden, and before day broke had killed most of them. And when, with the dawn, came other companies of Dhrakos, those who were in the castle cut them in pieces, and the King and all his captains were slain. Then the three Dhrakos made the youth King of the Dhrakos' country, and gave him the Golden Apple; and all the slain Dhrakos who had been their friends they brought back to life by sprinkling them with the water from the Well of Life. Eight days they rejoiced and made merry. And I left them well, and came here and found you better !

VII

THE STRINGLA PRINCESS

ONCE upon a time there was a King and a Queen who had three sons as beautiful as gold. But, as you know, man is never content, but forever wanting something more. Because they had nothing else to desire, they asked God to give them a daughter. Because they had no other cause for grief, they grieved that they had not a daughter to amuse them. For their sons were grown up and did not stay in the palace, but were always out of doors. So they prayed to God day and night to give them a daughter; and after a little while a baby girl was born to them. Just fancy the joy she brought with her! It was who should first hold the babe in his hands, who should first dandle it! When it was born two of the sons were at home, but the youngest was out hunting, and when he returned they told him that the Queen had borne a female child. In his joy he ran into his mother's

chamber, to take up his little sister and kiss her. As he held her in his arms, she turned and looked at him, and he saw that she had eyes like stars. Said he to himself,

‘Dear me, what sort of eyes are these which the child has?’—for they glittered as he looked at them. Then he gave back the baby to its mother, kissed her hand and her cheek, and went out.

During the night there was heard an uproar—a dreadful noise down in the stables.

‘What is that?—what can that be?’ every one wondered.

They hasten to the stables, and what do they see? The best horse strangled. The next night another, and the next again another!

‘Well-a-day,’ said one of the Princes, ‘this is a bad business. But I, who am the eldest, will go and find out what happens to the horses that they die thus.’

So he went down to the stable, and stayed there all night, but saw nothing; no horse died, nor did anyone come into the stable. The next night the second Prince said,

‘I will now go and watch.’

The Queen said to him, 'Yes, do thou go.' So he went, and this night also nothing happened; there was quiet in the stable.

The next evening no one went to watch, and again there was an uproar, a frightful noise, and they again found a horse dead. The youngest Prince then said nothing to anyone, but thought to himself,

'I will go alone and watch, for I don't like the fire in my sister's eyes!'

So, at nightfall, he took his sword, went down to the stable, and hid himself behind the door. Drawing his sword from its sheath, he waited to see who was the customer who strangled the horses. When he waited for some time, and nothing happened, he thought to himself,

'Some accursed serpent, it seems, must have strangled them.' But he still waited till the fearsome midnight should be past; and just as he was thinking of going away, he heard a faint rustling sound. He shrank back into his hiding-place, and what did he see?—his baby sister with her little arms outstretched and her little fingers outspread, throwing herself upon the neck of a horse to strangle it! He lost no time, but struck

a blow with his sword, and cut off her little finger. She turned, looked fiercely at him, and recognised him, but said nothing ; and the Prince, when he had cut off her finger, picked it up off the ground, and then hastened to his chamber. And all night he could not sleep a wink for grief and worry.

In the morning when God had dawned the day, he went to seek his brothers and told them what he had found out in the night—that their little sister was a Stringla and strangled the horses. He had watched her the night before, and had cut off her little finger. Then his brothers threw themselves upon him as if to destroy him, as did also the Queen and the King ; and all bade him be off, and never let them see him again.

‘Murderer ! Out on thy jealousy ! To cut off thy little sister’s finger, and maim her !’

Then he weepingly bade farewell to his brothers, and said, ‘Whether we shall meet again or not who can tell ?—for the Stringla will destroy us all !’

His brothers, instead of being sorry that he was going away, only loaded him with reproaches :

‘Art thou not ashamed, with thy jealousy, to pit thyself against a baby-girl, and cut off her finger, and maim her, to prove thy words true when thou sayest that our little sister is a Stringla?’

The poor youth made no reply, but gazed sadly at his brothers. He looked at the palace; his eyes filled with tears; then he went up to his chamber, dressed himself, took his arms, and fled, weeping as he ran, for he knew he would never again see his parents and brothers. He looked straight before him, and tramped and tramped, and still went on. When evening came, he climbed a tree, and slept, and when he awoke at dawn he again took to the road and journeyed on. After some days he came to a splendid palace, and found the door standing wide open. He went in, but saw nobody. Then he ascended a marble staircase, and there, seated on a sofa and leaning on gold-embroidered cushions, was a most beautiful maiden. When she saw the young Prince, she rose hastily and said,

‘Ha! How didst thou come here?’

‘The earth and kosmos tell of thy beauty, and I heard the fame of it, and came to see if

it were really so great; but now I see that thou art still more beautiful than I heard tell, indeed thou art.'

Said she, 'Never mind about that: would that I had not been beautiful, as my beauty has been my misfortune. For forty Dhrakos saw me, and tore me away from my parents, and brought me hither; and they guard me so that no one can come and steal me. Four years have passed since the foot of man trod in here; and now it has befallen thee to come, and the Dhrakos will eat thee, if they see thee.'

She had hardly spoken when they heard a noise, a great uproar.

'Alas!' she cried, 'they are coming! Now what shall we do?'

'Oh! I shall stand here,' said the Prince, 'and if I perish, I perish!'

'Ah! but I want you to live, and rescue me!' said the Princess.

The noise drew near. She lost no time, but gave him a slap, and he was changed into a heather broom which she propped up behind the door. A Dhrako comes in, turns up his nose very high, sniffs, and says,

‘I smell man’s flesh in here!’

‘Oh! some one passed by outside a little while ago, when the door was open, and the scent of him came in,’ said the Princess.

A second Dhrako came in, did the same, and said likewise, and she replied as before.

The third came, and, not to make a long story of it, all the forty. At last the maiden said,

‘Ah well, my brothers, I too am human, and smell human; eat me, and have done with it, that I may escape from your hands.’

Then the youngest said, ‘Let us leave her now, and go and eat with the other Dhrakos.’

They went away and ate heartily, and then each one went to his mattress and fell asleep. When she heard their snoring and knew that they were asleep, the Beauty went to the top story and hung out a red handkerchief at the casement; and immediately there arose afar off a cloud of dust and a commotion, and there came under her window a horseman, a most handsome youth, and said to her,

‘Have you decided to run away with me? What do you want with me?’

‘To run away! But how can we run away

when there are the forty Dhrakos and we should both perish?’

‘Dost thou wish me to fight with them? to kill them?’

‘But if thou shouldst perish, what would become of me?’ said the Beauty.

‘Well, then, why didst thou call me? What dost thou want?’ And he turned his horse to go.

‘Nonsense! Wait and hear; don’t go away! Don’t be angry! God has sent us a simpleton to save us!’

‘What sayest thou?—a simpleton? How can he save us?’

‘He is a simpleton because he fell in love with me without knowing me. I will tell him that I love him, and will set him to kill the forty Dhrakos, for he is very valiant.’

‘Well, and when he has killed them, what shall we do with him?’

‘I will send him to fetch me the Water of Life, and there let him leave his bones, and we will then live a joyful life. Go now away quickly, and don’t come back till I call thee.’

He whipped up his horse, and she shut the

window and went to where the heather broom was, and again she gave it a slap, and the Prince became a man as he was before. Said she,

‘Come now, what shall we do about the forty Dhrakos? So long as they live we cannot live, and we shall be in the Devil’s eye if they find us and eat us.’

‘If thou lovest me and art willing to take me for thy husband, I will engage to kill them.’

‘What, thou, one man, kill forty Dhrakos?’

‘When a man has a stout heart, what he sets his mind on he can do.’

‘Good luck to thee then, in God’s name, and if thou kill them I promise to be thine!’

The following evening, when the Dhrakos were coming home, he hid behind the outer gate—he had sharpened his sword well—and, as they came in one by one, he cut off their heads and threw them into a great well. When he had killed them all, he said to the Beauty,

‘I have kept my word, do thou now keep thine!’

‘What wouldst thou have? I love thee and desire thee, but we can stay but a short time together, for I am a Princess, and my Fate

foretold that I should be carried off by forty Dhrakos, and if there should be found a man to kill them, and he should marry me within the year, the blood of the Dhrakos would become a monster to strangle me. But if that man goes and brings the Water of Life and sprinkles me with it when he finds me strangled, then, indeed, we may live happily. But how canst thou go and bring this Water? I fear thou wouldst never return!’

‘And where is the Water of Life to be found?’ asked the Prince.

‘Oh, it is in a land far, far away, and very difficult to reach, and great valour and swiftness are needed, for where the Water is are two mountains which open and shut, and if thou art not nimble they will crush thee. But love me only, and all will be well.’

She embraced him, kissed him, and wept; and she gave him a jar to fill there, where the Water falls drop by drop, and told him to bring it full. ‘And don’t forget that thou leavest me here all alone, and waiting for thy speedy return,’ she added.

He took the jar, bade her farewell, and set out.

As he went along the road it became very warm, and at noonday he stopped and sat down under a tree, on a little hill. As he sat and looked about him, he espied afar off among the trees a beautiful palace. Said he,

‘Shall I not go in there and see if perchance I may learn the road to the Water of Life? If there are Nereids within, will they not pity me and tell me something? and if there are Dhrakos, may my sword be good!’

So he goes up to the palace and finds the gate standing wide open. He enters and sees nobody, only a large garden. He goes into the garden, and what does he see there? A lovely Nereid seated under a tree, and around her three great Dogs, which begin to bark when they see him.

But the Nereid patted them, and they licked her hand and were quiet. The Prince approached and saluted her with much courtesy and respect. She bade him welcome to her palace, and asked what she could do for him.

‘Ah! my Queen!—for I can give you no other name but Queen!—my woes are many and great!’ and he related to her all his story—how he had

found in the palace where he had last been a beautiful young woman and forty Dhvakos, and how she had sent him to bring her the Water of Life. The Nereid smiled and said,

‘Knowest thou where is the Water of Life?’

‘No ; but I shall seek for it, and find it.’

‘Well, because thou hast trusted me and told me thy secrets, I will tell thee where is the Water of Life, but on condition that thou give me thine oath to return this way ; and afterwards thou shalt go to the Beauty’s house, for I shall be anxious to know if thou returnest alive from thence.’

Then he swore to her that if he lived he would come first and see her, and afterwards go to the Beauty’s house. Then the Nereid said to him,

‘Thou must keep to the right for some hours. Then thou wilt observe a high and black mountain, and behind that mountain thou wilt see a higher ; but the second will be green, and upon it crawl great serpents with horns on their heads and with one eye in their foreheads, and others again with one horn and with many eyes under that horn. Those are the poisonous snakes. But fear them not and kill none, for I will give thee a potion to

drink, and they will not bite thee if thou touch them not. When thou hast passed over that mountain thou wilt see a lake, and, at the far side, two mountains which open and shut. In front of the lake thou wilt see a little ship moored to a withered tree. Unmoor the ship, embark, and spread the sails. Take these two pigeons, and, when thou comest near the mountains which open and shut, let fly the one pigeon, and if it does not pass through to the other side, but is crushed by the mountains, stay the ship a little while, for the mountains sometimes open and shut quickly and sometimes slowly; and if thou pass safely to the other side thou wilt find a cave, and within it falls, drop by drop, the Water of Life. Fill thy jar, but drink not of it, for, though it brings the dead to life, it kills the living. Then let go the other pigeon; and if the pigeon passes through, do thou also pass, take the Water, and return hither.'

Then the Prince thanked the Nereid warmly, drank the potion against the snakes which she gave him, took the two pigeons, and set off. Not to make a long story of it, he found the black, and afterwards the green mountain with

the great snakes, and then the lake and the moored ship. He went on board, unfurled the sails, and, as he came near, he let fly one of the pigeons and it passed alive to the other side; its tail only got scotched a bit. Then he set all his sails, and sped through with his little ship to the other side, and only the stern of the ship got smashed a little. He found the cave, filled his jar, got into the ship again, and let fly the other pigeon. When it had passed safely, he set his sails and passed through, came on shore, and presently arrived at the Nereid's house.

When she saw him coming back so soon and alive, she was amazed, and thought to herself,

‘What a pity such a youth should perish for the sake of a horrid wicked woman!’ (for, being a Nereid, she knew who had sent him). When he was come in, she said to him,

‘Welcome! Sit down and rest, and eat a little, and sleep, and go an hour later to thy beloved.’ And much more she said, so that he could not but stay, in order not to offend her who had shown him such kindness. And of course he thanked her, and said,

‘Without your aid I should have perished!’

When he had eaten and was sleeping, the Nereid went very, very softly to his side, took the jar, and changed it for another of spring water; and the jar which held the Water of Life she put in a cupboard and locked it up. After a little while the Prince awoke, took up the jar, bade the Nereid farewell, thanked her, and went away. When he was gone, the Nereid called to her biggest Dog,

‘Aslán! follow that Prince. Wait outside the door of the Dhrakos’ palace and observe what happens, and come and bring me tidings. Hearest thou? Be wary! Thou knowest what thou hast to do?’ The Dog wagged his tail, and disappeared.

Let us now leave the Dog to watch, and let us follow our beloved Prince. The Princess did not love the Prince, as we know, but another, who, so long as the Dhrakos were alive, feared to approach the palace. But when the Prince went to fetch the Water of Life, she immediately spread the red handkerchief, and her lover came at once, and she said to him,

‘I have sent away the never-returning simpleton; the serpents will eat him, or the mountains will crush him.’

So her lover stayed, and they lived happily. Some time passed, and they forgot all about our hero—for how were they to know that a Nereid had fallen in love with the Prince, the first time she saw him, and had helped him to bring the Water of Life?—and let things happen of themselves just as they did happen. So the Beauty, on the day the Prince returned, was at the window; and when she saw him afar off, she cried, in her fright,

‘*Po! po!* just what I dreaded! He has come back! What shall I do now?’ And she ran to her lover and said to him, ‘The Prince is coming, and now what will become of us? He will kill both thee and me if we cannot destroy him!’

‘He killed forty Dhrakos,’ replied her lover, ‘and cannot we kill one man?’

‘But we have not time now to make any plans; go hide thyself, and may God give the opportunity!’ She ran downstairs to the door as the Prince came near, and cried to him,

‘Welcome! Thou art come at last, and I was near dying of grief!’

The Prince stood and embraced her. She said, ‘Sit down now and stretch thyself while I go



HE FOUND THE GREEN MOUNTAIN WITH THE GREAT SNAKES.
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and prepare something to eat.' Then she went in, took a cup of wine, and put in it a potion, and said, 'Drink this, and lie down on the bed a little, while I go and get the food ready.'

He drank the wine, and sleep took him at once. Then she went and said to her lover,

'He is asleep, so finish him off!'

Then he took a knife, ran to the bed where the Prince lay, and cut him in pieces. He gathered him up in the sheet, knotted it, and threw it out of the window into the road. Aslán, the Nereid's Dog, was on guard outside the window, and when he saw the bloody sheet, he smelt at it, took it in his teeth, and ran off with it to his mistress. The Nereid, as soon as she saw the Dog come with the sheet, took it from his teeth, and spread it out on her bed, laid the body out very carefully, and put the pieces in their places. Then she ran to the garden for a winter melon, cut it into thin slices, dipped them into the Water of Life, and put them upon his wounds; then she began to pour over him the Water of Life and wetted him all over with it; she poured some into his mouth, and presently he began to move. The Nereid then raised him

in her arms very gently, very gently, and laved him again all over with the Water of Life. until he opened his eyes and asked,

‘Where am I?’

‘In my house; but thou must be quiet, and soon thou wilt be well.’

She gave him some more Water of Life to drink, covered him up, and said to him,

‘Now go to sleep again, and don’t ask any more questions.’

He slept for a day and a night and then woke up, and, seeing the Nereid at his side, asked her how he came there. So the Nereid told him all: how they had killed him, how her Dog had found him, how that couple had for some time wished to kill him, because she whom he loved, loved another. ‘For that she set thee to slay the Dhrakos, and the Water of Life was only a pretext to get thee eaten by the serpents.’

Then he grew angry and said, ‘It is impossible that such a beautiful woman could be an evil-doer! I knew that my sister was a Stringla, and why did I not know that this one was a Lamia?’

‘Ah, well, that is all over now, and done with; we must now see how thou canst revenge thyself.’

‘I will go at once and kill them both,’ said the Prince.

‘Thou art still weak; but I will now send Sainé to see when thy slayer goes out of the house to hunt, and when the Dog brings us the tidings, thou shalt go and kill her; and when her lover returns to the house thou must kill him, and finish with them.’

So he did. He went, killed the wicked pair, and came back again to the Nereid. Then he fell at the Nereid’s feet, and said to her,

‘Thou hast saved me from many deaths, and not from one only; now I am thy slave, so command me what I shall do.’

The Nereid told him that she had loved him from the first day she saw him, and all she asked for in return was that he would love her and be her husband.

He replied, ‘Dost thou deem me so thankless? I will be thy slave, not thy husband. One favour only I would ask—let me first go to our kingdom to see what has become of my most

unfortunate parents, and my brothers, and afterwards I will come and live with thee. If I come back glad, we will rejoice together; but if I come back sorrowful, thou wilt comfort me.'

'*Bravo!*' said she, 'I am proud of thee, and love thee all the more, because thou lovest and rememberest them who drove thee away from thy father's house and thy home. Go, then, and come back happy. I will await thee. Take these three dates, and when thou art gone from hence into some road, eat one, and plant the stone in the earth; and when thou hast gone again some distance farther, eat another, and again plant the stone; and do the same with the third. The dates will take root, and grow at once into tall trees; and if anyone pursue thee, climb up into the date-trees; and shouldst thou need any help, call three times from the top of the date-tree, "Come, my Aslán! Come, my Sainé! Come, my Boutalá!"'¹ and the Dogs will run to help thee.'

The Prince took the three dates and kissed the Nereid good-bye, for he did not know whether he should ever see her again.

¹ These names are Turkish.

He took the road, and went on, and on. He ate one of the dates and planted the stone; he went farther and ate the others; he did all that the Nereid told him, and journeyed on until he came into his native city. And what did he see there? Everywhere solitude; the shops deserted and dark; no man called to another. He came to the palace gate, and what did he see and hear within? The Djins playing at ball—*Tzan, tzin, top inar!* He shuddered and fell a-weeping. He wept long, and then mounted the stairs of the palace. There, in a corner, he saw his father, a miserable stump, without legs or arms. He ran to embrace him; but instead of saying, ‘Welcome, my boy!’ he called to the Stringla Princess,

‘Come hither, my good daughter, and revenge thyself: this is he who cut off thy finger!’

Then the little Stringla ran up and cried, ‘Oh, welcome, my little brother who escaped from my hands! Whenever I saw my maimed finger I remembered thee and said, “Let him fall but once into my hands!” Come now and beat this drum, so that I may know thou art not fled, while I go and sharpen my teeth so as not

to torture thee much, as thou art my little brother!’ And she gave him a drum to beat till she came back.

But no sooner had she gone downstairs than a Mouse came out of its hole and said to him,

‘Why dost thou stay here and beat the drum? She will sharpen her teeth and come and eat thee as she ate the others!’

‘But what can I do?’ asked the Prince.

‘Give me the drum to beat, and do thou run away.’

He gave the drum to the Mouse, and he beat it with his tail. He went down to the bake-house, took off his trousers, tied up the feet, stuffed them with chaff, hung them high up on a beam, and set off running. When the Stringla had sharpened her teeth, she came upstairs. *Phrouct!* off goes the Mouse to his hole. The Stringla Princess looks on this side and that, but sees him not. She runs all about the house, upstairs and down, and at last she catches sight of the hanging trousers.

‘Ah!’ she cried, ‘thou hast got up there, hast thou, so that I may not reach thee!’ and she snaps at him with her teeth and bites the cloth

which was stuffed with chaff, and the chaff falls on her face and nearly blinds her.

‘Ah! Ah! even if thou hide thee in a snake’s hole I will drag thee out!’ she cries again, and runs up and down in the garden, but cannot find him. At last she runs out into the road, and sees him a long way off, but he was already far away. He raced on in front, and she followed. Fast as he ran, she ran faster; and she had nearly caught him when the Prince saw the first date-palm, and climbed up into it. The Stringla lost no time, but began to gnaw at the trunk that the palm-tree might fall. As her teeth were sharpened, she was not long about it; and the tree was about to fall when the Prince climbed up to the top and, catching hold of the branch of another of the date-palms, swung himself upon it. The Stringla Princess again lost no time: she ran to the second date-palm and began to gnaw it. In a little while the second tree began to totter. The Prince also lost no time, but took hold of the branches and swung himself into the third date-palm. She ran to the third and began to gnaw it likewise, crying,

‘Ah! now at length whither wilt thou go from me? There is no other date-tree, and, as I am hungry and angry, I will not leave a bone of thee!’

Then the Prince called to mind the words of the Nereid, and he shouted with all his might,

‘Come, my Aslán, come! Come, my Sainé, come! Come, my Boutalá, come!’

When the Nereid’s three great Dogs heard this cry, they broke loose, bless your eyes! in a sweat, and fell upon the Stringla Princess, and tore her to bits of bits.

Then the Prince returned sorrowfully to the Nereid, and when he had told her all he had seen and heard, she accompanied him back to his palace, attended by all her servants. As soon as they were arrived, he sent out criers to proclaim throughout all the land that the Stringla was destroyed; that the youngest son of the King was at home again; that he had married a rich Queen; and that whoever of his subjects wished to come back, he would love him as a brother. So, when the people who had fled heard that the terrible Stringla was slain, they returned in great joy, and did

homage to their King, whose fame had quickly spread abroad.

Then our handsome Prince took the beautiful Nereid for his wife, and during the wedding festivities he distributed much money and rich gifts to his subjects. He also greatly enlarged his kingdom, by adding to it the lands of the forty Dhrakos he had slain. And he had sons and heirs, and became of all the Kings of the world the most noble and the most just.

As for the poor old King, his father, they searched everywhere for him, but found him not, whether alive or dead. This is the end of the story of the Stringla Princess.

VIII

THE QUEEN OF THE GORGONS

ONCE upon a time there was a King and Queen, and they had an only son. Good as the King and Queen were, their son was perverse in an equal degree. In the royal palace lived also the King's Grand Vizier, who had a son of about the same age, but as handsome and good as the Prince was ugly and bad; and the Prince was always on the look-out for an opportunity of persecuting him.

One day the Vizier's son went out hunting with his tutor, and as they were riding along together the youth saw lying on the ground a splendid golden feather. Said he to his tutor,

‘Shall I get down and pick up this feather? It is a beauty!’

‘What shall I say, my boy? Thou must decide. For if thou take the feather thou wilt repent it; and, again, if thou take it not thou wilt still repent it!’

‘Ah well,’ replied the youth, ‘then I will take it and repent it, for I don’t think I have ever seen such a beautiful feather.’ So he dismounted, placed the feather in his cap, and they rode on.

In the meantime the Prince had gone up to a little kiosk which was on the roof of the palace, from whence, with his spyglass, he could see for miles in every direction. Presently he caught sight of something that flashed in the sun like a diamond. At first he did not know what it could be, as it moved along among the trees, but presently he made out that it was something in the cap of the Vizier’s son that gleamed like a great jewel.

‘Why, where could the fellow have got such a splendid aigrette! I am a Prince and my father is the King, but I have nothing half so superb. When he comes back to the palace he shall give it to me.’

So, in the evening, when the youth returned from the chase, the Prince sent word to him to come upstairs immediately, as he wanted to speak to him. So he came.

Said the Prince, ‘What was it thou wert wearing in thy cap that shone like a diamond?’

‘Oh, my Prince, it was only a feather.’

‘A feather! What sort of a feather? Let me see it!’

The youth brought the feather, and put it into the hands of the other, saying, ‘As it pleases you so much, my Prince, pray keep it for yourself.’

‘Oh, what do I care for a feather?—go bring me the bird that shed it. If thou bring not the bird, there is no longer a place for thee in the palace.’

Well, the poor youth went downstairs to his room, and began to weep and to curse the hour in which he had picked up the feather. Presently his tutor comes in, and asks him,

‘What ails thee, my lad, that thou weepest so bitterly?’

‘You may well ask what ails me! Would I had left the feather on the road!’ And he related what the Prince required of him.

‘Dry thy tears,’ then said the tutor, ‘and we will go to thy father, and take counsel with him.’

The Vizier then advised the boy and his tutor to take a number of skins full of wine, and go to a cistern in the forest where many wild birds

came to drink. When they came to the place they drew off all the water from the cistern and turned off the supply. Then they emptied the wine-skins into the basin, and went to a distance to watch what would happen. In a little while they saw a great flashing light, and a magnificent golden eagle flew down to the cistern. It bathed in the wine, drank a little, flew up in the air, again descended and drank more, tried to fly again, but could not, and sank to the ground. The tutor then loses no time, but runs and seizes the bird, brings it to his pupil, and they return with it to the palace.

Now, while the Queen of the Gorgons and the Birds was that day out walking, she was told that the great Golden Eagle had been caught and taken to the King's palace. In her anger and distress she tore off her girdle and threw it away, ran to her palace and shut herself up to weep, for she was very fond of the Eagle.

Well, in the meantime they brought the Eagle to the Prince, who was delighted to have the handsome bird, but also annoyed that the Vizier's son had been clever enough to catch it. After a few days, the youth again took his tutor

and went out hunting; and as they were returning home through a valley just before sunset, he caught sight of something shining in the grass under a tree, and, riding up to it, what should it be but a broad girdle with Fishes and Gorgons pictured on it in pearls and diamonds. He picks it up, and gallops back with it to his tutor.

‘See!’ he cries, ‘see what I have found! Shall I take it, or shall I leave it? Tell me!’

‘How shall I advise thee, my boy? For if thou take it thou wilt repent it; and, again, if thou take it not thou wilt still repent it.’

‘Eh, well-a-day! I will take it, and I shall not repent it, since the girdle is so beautiful.’

So he clasped it round his waist, and they set off for the palace. The Prince again saw him from the kiosk, and, as soon as he had alighted at the door, sent word that he wanted him upstairs. Taking off the girdle, he obeyed the summons, and the Prince asked what shining thing he had been wearing while out hunting.

‘Oh, it was a girdle I picked up under a tree in the valley, my Prince.’

‘Go and bring it to me that I may see what kind of girdle it is that gleams so brightly.’

The youth brought it, and after the Prince had admired it very much, he said, ‘If the girdle is so beautiful, how much more beautiful must be the lady who wore it! Thou must now go and bring her to me without fail.’

‘Oh, but, my Prince, that is not possible! How can I find the lady who wore that girdle and bring her to you?’

‘Well, whether thou canst or not, thou must bring her, or thou wilt sorely repent it.’

The youth hastens to his tutor, crying, ‘The Prince bids me bring the lady to whom the girdle belongs! What am I to do? How can I find her who lost that girdle?’

‘What shall I say, my boy? Thou shouldst not have taken it, or shouldst have hidden it from the Prince. Tears and cries are useless; let us now see how we can find this lady.’

So they mounted their horses and rode through and beyond the valley where the girdle had been found; and then, taking a by-road, they came to a splendid palace, half hidden in a

wood, and in the garden a beautiful lady was walking all alone.

‘Ah!’ cried the youth to his companion, ‘this must be she who wore that girdle!’ Then they rode up to her, seized and wrapped her in a mantle, and the youth placed her in front of him on his horse, and held her tightly so that she might not escape. As they rode away with her she shrieked and entreated, but the youth said,

‘Forgive me, lady, for thus doing violence to you. The fault is not mine. It was the Prince who sent me to fetch the Eagle for him, and afterwards to fetch your ladyship, or he would have my head cut off.’

Then, in her anger, the lady broke the strings of pearls that were round her neck, and scattered them on the road. Presently they arrived at the palace; and when the Prince saw how beautiful she was, he became quite crazy with love for her. The King came and told her that if she would marry his son she should be Queen of the country. But she replied,

‘I can say neither “yea” nor “nay” until you bring me all the pearls which I scattered on the road; not one must be missing.’



IN THE GARDEN A BEAUTIFUL LADY WAS WALKING ALL ALONE.
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‘You shall have them all, my Princess,’ exclaimed the King’s son. And the youth was again sent to perform the task.

So the Vizier’s son and the tutor rode to the spot where the pearls were scattered, and when they had dismounted and were searching here and there they saw an ant-hill, and all round about it the ants had arranged the pearls in rows. The youth picked them up joyfully, and carried them to the Prince. When the lady had counted them, she was very pleased to find that not one was missing. Said she to the Prince,

‘I thank you ; but before I take you for my husband we must punish him who has done me such despite.’

‘Command, my Queen, and you shall be obeyed. How shall we punish him?’ responded the Prince gallantly.

‘Let the scullions heat an oven during seven days and nights, and, on the eighth day, let them throw him in the oven to be burnt.’

So the Prince gave the orders, and you may imagine the grief and anger of the Vizier’s son, of his father, his tutor, and every one—for he was

greatly beloved. The next day the Princess said that she was going to walk by the seashore, and the Prince went with her. There she began to repeat strange words which the Prince did not understand—*Solomonic*¹ words—full of magic.

‘What are you saying, my Princess,’ asked he; ‘you speak and speak, and I comprehend nothing.’

‘I am saying my prayers,’ she replied, with a little smile.

The Prince said no more, but turned away and went back to the palace.

The seven days were past during which the scullions had been busy piling wood under the baking oven; but while they fed the fires in front the Gorgons were, by their Queen’s secret orders, pouring water in behind to put them out. Then the guards seized the Vizier’s unhappy son and cast him into the middle oven, and they

¹ In Oriental legend King Solomon appears as the greatest of magicians, and master of Ashmedai and his myrmidons. The various stories of which Solomon is made the hero, are, however, but reminiscences of the Chaldean ‘King of the Gods,’ the wise Ea, one of whose names, Sallimanu, was adopted by the Hebrew Prince whose proper name was Jedidiah. (Compare SAYCE, *Religion of the Ancient Babylonians*, pp. 57, 58.)

shut the iron door and left him there all night. But when, at dawn, the oven was opened, he came out alive and well. They were all amazed, and there was great rejoicing.

Then said the Prince to the Queen of the Gorgons, 'I have performed thy will; do thou now appoint a day for our wedding.'

'Ah, but I require still another proof that thou lovest me!' she replied.

'If I love thee?' cried the Prince. 'I love thee madly! For love of thee have I not given my best friend to be burnt?'

'That does not suffice,' replied she. 'For the Vizier's son they heated the oven seven days and nights, and he came out alive. For thee the oven shall be heated but two hours, and if thou lovest me thou wilt go in; but if not, I am able to depart, and return to the place whence I was brought.'

Well, what could the Prince do? He tried to induce her to set him some other task to prove his love, but in vain; she said it was her last fancy. Then, when he saw that he could not do otherwise, the King's son called the servants and bade them heat the oven for two hours,

but privately he told them to put very little wood in the furnace so that the oven might not get hot. After two hours had passed, the Queen of the Gorgons took the Prince by the hand, and they went down to the courtyard. When they came to the ovens the Queen said to him,

‘Go in, Prince, if thou wouldst have me for thy wife, for my parents left me their blessing if the husband I married first entered an oven ; but if otherwise, I was to have their curse.’

The Prince, perceiving that the ovens were cool, then entered the central one. But as soon as the door was shut on him, the Queen clapped her hands and the Gorgons threw a great fire into the furnaces from behind, and he was burnt to a cinder. Hastening into the garden where the Vizier’s son was sitting under a tree, she took him by the hand, clapped her palms together, and a whirlwind rose and carried them to her palace. As they stood at the foot of the marble steps, she said to him,

‘Thou who, though young, art valiant and a hero, art worthy to rule with me over the Gorgons. For I am the Queen of all the Gorgons and all the Birds. And—because I love

thee—I commanded the Gorgons, and they brought water to cool the ovens when thou didst enter, but brought fire when I would destroy the Prince who was not worthy to live and reign after his father. If thou desire me for thy wife, then wed me; but if not, thou art free to return to thy parents.’

The youth fell at her feet, kissed her hand, and said,

‘Not the husband only, but the slave will I be of her who saved my life.’

Then the whole World laughed, and all the Birds began to sing. The Vizier and his lady were invited to the palace of the Gorgon-Queen, together with his tutor, and the wedding feast was held. And the happy pair reigned, and are still reigning, over the Gorgons and the Birds.

IX

THE SUGAR-MAN

THERE was once a King and a Queen who had a most beautiful daughter, and as they had no son, they were very anxious that she should marry. But she refused even to look at any of the Princes who sought her in marriage, and told her parents that she would make with her own hands a husband of sugar. So she bought sugar, and sat by herself and pounded and sifted it, and would let no one else touch it. When she had kneaded it well, she fashioned with it a very handsome man, according to her fancy, and then locked herself up with the image in her chamber, where she lighted many tapers and offered prayers to God that He would give it speech and a soul, and make it a man. Forty days and nights she prayed, and at the end of the forty days the image began to take the complexion of a man and to speak.

The maiden then ran to her parents and told

them that the Sugar-Man was alive, and begged them to send out the invitations for the wedding ceremonies. As soon as the people of the city learnt that the Sugar-Man spoke and that the wedding was to be held, they all hastened to see him, because he was said to be a very handsome and charming man. Then they had music, and drums, and great rejoicings, the wedding took place, and the couple lived happily.

Throughout all the kingdoms it soon became known that a Sugar Image had become human, and alive, and that he had taken such and such a Princess to wife; and one Princess, without ever having seen the Sugar-Man, fell so madly in love with him that she became sick unto death. 'Either I must have him for my husband, or I must die!' was her constant cry. And when her parents said to her, 'How can you have him when he is already married to another?' she would not listen to them, but shut herself up in her chamber without eating, or drinking, or sleeping, and they doubted if she would live to take a husband; for all the doctors who were called had given her up.

You may imagine the grief of her parents,

for they were old, and had no other child. As there was evidently no hope from the doctors, the King at last resolved to call a Council; and he summoned all the grandees of his kingdom to consult with them. One of the King's Councillors advised him to make ready a ship, and send some of his gentlemen with rich gifts to the Sugar-Man, whom they would invite to a feast on board the vessel, and then, while they were eating, weigh anchor and sail away with him. And all approved of his advice.

No time was then lost; the very next day the ship was fitted out; they took the presents and set sail for the country of the Sugar-Man. After they arrived at that kingdom, the ship was anchored, the messengers disembarked and went with the presents to the palace. When they had presented the gifts to the Sugar-Man, they invited both him and the King to a feast on the ship, so that they might suspect nothing. But the old King excused himself and said, 'I am an old man; let my son-in-law go alone.'

The Sugar-Man then went to his wife and asked her if she would allow him to go to the ship to dine. She did not wish him to go, but

hung on his neck, crying, 'I will not let thee go!'

But her parents said, 'For shame, you foolish girl, this will not do. As these nobles have brought so many gifts he must go and dine with them.' Then she allowed him to go, but bade him not to stay long. So he went. But when he was come on board, and they were eating, the anchor was weighed, and the vessel sailed swiftly away. Meanwhile those at table began to tell various stories, and the Sugar-Man listened to them with great pleasure. Finally, when the feast and the stories were ended, he rose to return to the palace, and was taking leave, when they said to him,

'It is impossible for you to go now, my Prince; we will take you to visit our King, and bring you back again immediately.'

He began to scream, and to weep, and wanted to throw himself into the sea. They said to him,

'Have a little patience, and don't make yourself ill, and to-morrow we will bring you back.'

At last the ship arrived, and anchored, and the messengers announced to the King that they had brought the Sugar-Man. I leave you to

imagine the joy of the Princess when she heard that they had brought him. But he, poor fellow, fell ill with grief, and the Princess tried to comfort him by saying,

‘Only get well, dear Prince, and I myself will take you back to your wife!’

So, one way and another, she beguiled him, and pacified him, and he began to like her; and after a short time he took her for his wife.

Let us leave them now to enjoy themselves, and return to the Sugar-Man’s other wife. She, poor thing, had stood at the window watching for his return, when all at once she saw the ship sail away. Then she began her cries and tears, and finally said to her parents,

‘I will go and seek him; it is impossible for me to live without him!’

Her parents tried to comfort her, and said, ‘Dear girl, stay thou here, and we will send people to find him and bring him back to thee.’

But the Princess would listen to no one. She took much money, and three suits of costly clothes; one was like the sky with the stars, the second resembled the fields with their flowers, and the third the sea with its golden

fishes. When she had dressed herself like a Nun, with her hair gathered up under a cowl, she took up her wallet with the dresses in it, her bundle, and her staff, and bade her parents not to grieve, for she would in a very short time return with the Sugar-Man. One favour only she would ask of them—to give her a ship at her orders. When the ship was ready, our Princess embraced her parents, kissed them, wept, and so went away. She sailed for a whole year from one country to another, seeking her husband; and at last, at a certain place where she had landed, seeing a great crowd, she asked what was happening. The people replied,

‘Oh, we have here the Sugar-Man for Prince, and it is a year to-day since he married our Princess, so the couple are going to the church to return thanks to God.’

The Nun then went and stood in a place where she could see her husband pass by with his other wife. When she had seen him, without loss of time she hurried back to the ship, took the three beautiful dresses, put them in her wallet, bade the sailors have everything

in readiness to depart, returned on shore, and came to the palace. There she begged the servants to take her in, as she had nowhere to stay, and offered to do any work they might give her, because she was a stranger and knew no one in that city.

‘You must wait till the Princess comes home,’ they replied. ‘We have no authority; she may take you in, but we cannot.’

While they spoke, they saw the royal party returning to the palace, as the ceremony was over. Then she stood in a corner of the courtyard and watched the Princess; and the Princess, seeing her, asked,

‘What do you want here?’

‘I came here, because I am a stranger, a Nun, that you might take me in, and any work you give me I will do, my Princess.’

Said she, ‘We have no place for you in the palace, but since you are a stranger I will take you in, and find some work for you.’

So they set her to tend the geese. Some time passed, and one evening our Princess took out and put on one of her beautiful dresses, the

sky with the stars. A slave-girl saw her, and asked, wonderingly,

‘What dress is that?—is it yours?’

‘Oh, yes, mine it is.’

‘What would you like the Princess to give you for it?’

‘I don’t want anything; but if the Prince is as handsome as they say, let her allow me to gaze alone upon him while he sleeps, and I will give it to her.’

Then the maid went upstairs to the Queen, and said to her,

‘Ah, my Princess! The Nun we took in has such a lovely dress—the sky with the stars!—and if you had it to wear you would be so beautiful that the Prince would love you even more than he does now.’

‘And what dress is that which will make me so beautiful?’

‘Oh, it is one thing to speak of it, and another to see it! You have no such gown as that, my Princess!’

‘Have I not? Then go and ask the Nun if she will sell it, and I will give her what she wants for it.’

‘I did ask her, but she doesn’t want to sell it; she said, “I am going to the convent and don’t want money.”’

‘Eh, then, what does she ask in exchange for the dress if she doesn’t want money? What can she do with it, as she is a Nun?’

‘I will tell you, my Princess: what she wants is, she says, “to gaze on the Prince while he sleeps, as he is so handsome.”’

‘*Bá!* how can that be? Well, I will go and ask my nurse and see what she will say, and whatever she counsels me I will do.’

So she went to her nurse and said,

‘Tell me, Nurse, what I shall do—there is a Nun here who has a costly dress, and will not let me have it. I offered her money, but she doesn’t want it, but wants to gaze on the Prince while he sleeps.’

‘*Bá!* what kind of Nun is she to ask such a thing! Nun, indeed!’ cried the nurse. Then she said, ‘We will mix a potion in the Prince’s wine, and put him to bed, and when he is asleep we will tell her to go and watch him, and sit near him all night.’

So it happened that at the end of supper the

Princess put in the potion, and the Sugar-Man fell asleep immediately. Then she bade the slaves carry him to bed; and they called the Nun, and said to her,

‘Go up now to the Prince’s chamber.’

When she was left alone with the Sugar-Man, she began to tell him all her sorrows. She raised him up in her arms, and said again and again,

‘Rememberest thou not how I made thee a man, and gave thee life, and now I am like to die of grieving for thee, I who have come here and am become a servant only to see thee?’

He made no reply, because they had given him the potion, and he heard nothing, but was like a dead man. God brought the dawn of day, and she went down and gave the dress to the Princess. The next day she put on the golden dress on which was brodered the field with its flowers. The same little slave saw her again, and said,

‘Oh, what dress is this? It is more beautiful than the other! Wilt thou not give this, also, to the Princess? What canst thou do with it?’

‘Oh, yes, I will give it to her if she will let me go again to the Prince’s chamber.’

Then the little slave went again to her mistress and said,

‘You have no idea, my Queen, what a magnificent dress that Nun is wearing again! I told her to give it to you, and she said, “I will give it to her if she will allow me to pass one more night in the Prince’s chamber.”’

The Princess laughed and said, ‘Let her come again in the evening.’

Then again, as they sat at table, she threw a potion into the Sugar-Man’s last cup of wine; he slept again; and the slaves carried him to bed and bade her go upstairs. There she wept more bitterly than ever and cried to him,

‘Wilt thou not arise whom I made a man from sugar? Wilt thou not arise when I tell thee my sorrows?’ And many things she said to him, and beat her breast until morning, but he made no answer. Then she in despair went downstairs to her chamber, and gave the Princess her second dress. There remained to her no other hope than the dress with the sea



THE IMAGE BEGAN TO TAKE THE COMPLEXION OF A MAN AND TO SPEAK.
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and the golden fishes, on which the fishes' eyes were all of diamond-stones.

Now the Sugar-Man had become great friends with the son of the King's Vizier, and this youth slept in a room which was near the Prince's chamber and heard all the cries which the Nun uttered, and her weeping. In the morning, when he got up, he came to the Prince and said,

'My King, my long-lived one, I have something to tell you, but let us go out to a distance, for in the palace we may be overheard.'

So when they had gone out, and away to a distance, he said to the Sugar-Man,

'Two nights ago there came a maiden—or so it seemed, for her voice was very sweet—and said to you, "Wilt thou not awake, my Sugar-Man? Hearest thou me not? Dost thou not pity me who have suffered so much for thy sake before I made thee a man? Now I beat the seas and the dry land only to see thee! and even now that I have found thee thou wilt not speak to me. Dost thou not pity me?" And a great deal more she said, and wept. So sad was her voice that I too wept in my chamber!'

Then the King, astonished, said, 'How did I not hear it?—was I dead?'

'No, my King, only they probably throw into your wine a potion, and you sleep heavily, and don't hear. But I will tell you what you must do? Don't drink wine at table, but pretend only, and at the end of dinner feign also to sleep and don't move at all, and make pretence not to hear anything.'

The Prince then embraced and thanked his friend, saying, 'Henceforward thou shalt be my brother!' and each went away to his own affairs.

Well, on the third day the Nun put on her other dress, the one embroidered with the sea and its fishes, and again the little slave saw her, and cried,

'Oh, what wonderful dress is this! Ah! ah! ah! This *is* a beauty!'

'Well, I have no more dresses,' replied the Nun. 'If the Princess will let me see the Prince once more, I will give her this, too.'

Then the slave went to the Princess, and said, 'Ah! ah! ah! you have no idea, my lady, how beautiful a dress the Nun is wearing! That gown has the sea with all the little golden

fishes on it, and the fishes' eyes are all of diamonds!

'Why, where in the world did she get these dresses?'

'They were her mother's, she says, and now she has no more left. If she may see the Prince again to-night she will give it to you, and go away.'

Then said the Princess, 'Well, tell her to come in the evening; she must be foolish, or she would understand that he sleeps.'

So then the little slave goes to the Nun, and tells her to get ready in the evening to go to the Prince, and take with her the gown, and 'Good luck go with you!' says she. Then, as his custom was, the Sugar-Man went to dine, and they put a potion in the wine. He pretended to drink, but when no one was looking he threw the wine away, and afterwards he feigned to be sleepy, and fell down. Then said the Princess to her people,

'Take him now and carry him up to his chamber, and tell the Nun to go and gaze upon him.'

The Prince heard all, but said nothing.

So in a little time the Nun went upstairs, and began lamenting that it was the last evening that she would see him, and that she must lose sight of him and go, and how that her sorrowing parents awaited her, and that she would throw herself into the sea because she could not live without him. And much more she said, so that he began to weep and started up, and said to her,

‘Who canst thou be but my wife, my beloved one!’ And they related to each other their sorrows, and agreed to flee away on the following day. Then said the Princess, ‘I have in the harbour a ship with yellow sails. I will go on board, and you must find means to come to me, and we will flee away.’

When morning dawned the Princess told the Sugar-Man to pretend to be asleep, and she would go down to her chamber. She went down, put on her ragged clothing, sent to the other Princess the beautiful dress, hied her on board the ship and unfurled the yellow sails, and then waited for the Sugar-Man. When he rose in the morning, he took care to see his friend, the Vizier’s son, and said to him,

‘She who beat her breast and wept was my wife, who formed me from sugar and prayed to God, and He made me a man and gave me life and speech; and I must now find means to flee, and, if thou wilt, thou shalt come with me.’

Said he, ‘I cannot come now, for there is my father, and they would slay him; but in time I may be able to come and join thee.’

Then the Sugar-Man bade him farewell, told him where his kingdom was, and arose and went away. Before the Princess was up in the morning, he went and found his wife in the ship, which had the sails ready set and the anchor weighed, and they sailed away.

Let us now leave the Princess to weep and to seek everywhere for him, and accompany the Sugar-Man and his wife. When the ship arrived at their country, they found the palace all draped with black, because the Princess had been a year away, and they thought she must be lost. I leave you to imagine the joy which her return caused throughout all the kingdom! There was again a great ceremony, and the old King arose and said to his son-in-law,

‘My son, thou shalt rule over the kingdom, for I am grown old, and I want to be quiet; I cannot rule any longer.’

And so they made the Sugar-Man King; and he sat on the throne and ruled the kingdom with great wisdom and justice. And they lived happily. And we more happily still!

X

THE QUEST OF THE GOLDEN WAND

THIS is the beginning of the story: Good-evening to the noble company!

Once upon a time there lived a King who had a daughter lovely beyond compare. She was indeed so exquisitely beautiful that did she

‘Command the Sun, he would stand still,
The Morning Star, he’d twinkle!’

Of course all the neighbouring Princes wanted to marry her; but she found a thousand reasons for not accepting any one of them. Among the crowd of Princes in her father’s city there was, however, one very handsome youth who had touched her heart a little; but still she could not make up her mind to accept him, and decided that she would first prove if he were really as brave as he was handsome, and also if he loved her well enough to do her bidding.

So one day she told her father the King that

she would take for her husband the one among her suitors who should bring to her the Magical Wand of the Famous Dhrako, which would open any door he leaned it against. Now this Dhrako was the strongest and most savage of all the Dhrakos. He had one eye in his forehead, which always remained open whether he was awake or asleep, so that no one could approach him without being seen and devoured. Consequently, when the suitors heard of the Princess's decision they trembled with fright, and made excuses to return to their own country.

But the handsome Prince loved the beautiful Princess so dearly that he resolved either to gain for her the Golden Wand or perish in the attempt. So, without telling anyone of his purpose, he took the long road to try his luck. Day after day he travelled, over hill and dale, through the wildernesses and desolate places, until, on waking up from sleep one morning, he saw at a little distance an Old Woman sifting flour into a great baking-pan. But the flour did not fall into the pan, but on the ground; and when he came nearer he saw that the Old Woman was blind. He called out to her,

‘Wait, mother, don’t sift the flour, you are spilling it on the ground.’

‘But I can’t see, my laddie,’ said the Old Woman.

‘Give it to me, mother, and I will sift for you,’ said the Prince, as he came up to her.

So he set to and sifted the flour, and put it in a sack which lay near, and then asked her: ‘Where are you going to carry it, mother? Let me help you.’

The Old Woman was very much pleased with the Prince, and she said to him,

‘My boy, in return for the favour thou hast done me, what shall I do for thee?’

‘Mother,’ replied the Prince, ‘give me your blessing only, for you cannot help me in what I am seeking.’

‘And what is it thou seekest?’ asked the Old Woman. ‘Wilt not tell me, that I may know, and see if I cannot perhaps help thee?’

‘I am a Prince, mother, an only son, and I heard them tell of a Princess who is very beautiful, and that many Princes go to ask her in marriage; but she finds no husband to her

liking. Then I took my mother's blessing, and went just to see her and return home again; but what would you?—when I saw her I was driven crazy by her beauty and by the sweetness of her face. At last her father told her that she must really make up her mind to marry. Then she said that she would take for her husband none but he who should bring her the Golden Wand of the Famous Dhrako, which he leans against doors and they open.'

'Listen, my son,' said the Old Woman, 'thou hast undertaken a hard task, but thy parents' blessing and mine will give thee courage. Follow this road to a place where the grass grows on it green and high, for no man has ever trodden upon it. Go straight on, and then, beyond the rising ground to which it leads, thou wilt come to mountains and ravines, and thence thou wilt see, afar off, a great cavern; go near, and if thou hear sounds of snoring coming out, it will mean that the Dhrako is within and asleep. Remain, then, at a distance till the door of the cavern opens, for he has his flocks inside and puts in front a great rock which no one can move. Thou must wait

till the Dhrako opens to drive out his flock, and then find means to hide thyself in the cavern; and when he comes back to sleep, and folds his flocks, and closes the cavern again with the rock, do thou listen, and from the snoring thou wilt know that he is asleep. Come down then from thy hiding-place, and go near him. Tied to his beard is a golden key, and with these scissors thou must cut the key together with his beard, and when he opens the cavern do thou go out too. When thou hast succeeded in getting out, my son, take again the grass-grown road till thou comest to a great palace. When thou leanest the key against the door of the palace, it will open. Enter and fear nothing. In a great chamber thou wilt see a Horse and a Dog; and before the Horse bones for him to eat, and hay before the Dog. Then do thou, without a word, change them, and give the bones to the Dog, and the rest thou wilt learn later from the Horse.'

Then the Prince thanked the Old Woman, gave her some sequins, took the scissors which she gave him, and set off. He took the long, grass-grown road, and saw the great cavern.

He went near, but heard no snoring; peeped in, and saw that there was no one in the cavern. There was, however, a great cauldron full of milk, and a bannock as big as a mill-stone. Then the Prince bethought him that it was many days since he had eaten. So he broke a piece off the bannock and dipped it in the milk, and he ate, and ate, until he was satisfied. Afterwards he looked about, and, seeing a hollow high up in the rock, he climbed up and hid himself. After a little while he heard the sheep bells, and concluded that the flocks were returning and the Dhrako with them. Then he drew back in his hiding-place, and prayed God to help him. As soon as the Dhrako had entered the cave, he drew-to the rock which shut up the opening of the cave, and sat down to eat. When he had eaten, he found that he was not satisfied, and cried, ‘What an amazing appetite I have to-day—neither the milk nor the bannock satisfies me!’

But I quite forgot to tell you that the Old Woman had given the Prince a powder to throw into the milk, so that after the Dhrako had drunk it he might sleep heavily. So when

the Dhrako had eaten, he threw more logs on the fire, and went to sleep.

When the Prince heard the snoring, and understood that the Dhrako was asleep, he climbed down very, very softly, cut the hairs, took the little key from his beard, and then climbed up again into his hiding-place. But, afterwards, it occurred to him that when the Dhrako awoke and saw that the key was missing from his beard, he would look about to find it. So he got down again, took a long pole, sharpened it, put it in the fire, and when it was red-hot he stuck it into the eye of the Dhrako and blinded him. He began to roar terribly, and the noise brought the other Dhrakos, to see what was the matter with their chief. But they could not enter, because the rock was in front of the cave and they could not remove it, and as he continued to roar they concluded that he was drunk, and went away. After a while the Dhrako pushed away the stone, and opened the cave, and sitting at the mouth he began to fondle and let out his sheep one by one. There was one very big and woolly ram among them, and the Prince

crept between his legs, hiding himself under his long, shaggy wool; and he thus managed to get out of the cave while the Dhrako was fondling the ram.

Now we will leave the Dhrako to find out who blinded him, and follow the Prince. He took the green road which the Old Woman had described to him, and after he had gone some way he saw the palace from afar. When he came up to the door, he placed the key in the lock, turned it, and entered. Within, he saw a splendid Horse fastened with chains, and he had before him a heap of bones; and a splendid big Dog, and he had before him a heap of hay. He tried to loosen the Horse, but could not. Then he put the hay before the Horse, and the bones before the Dog. When the Horse and the Dog had eaten they began to speak, and asked him,

‘How didst thou get here, my boy? The Famous Dhrako will eat thee!’

Then the youth told them how he had blinded the Dhrako, and that he had come here seeking a Golden Wand.

‘Who advised thee to come hither?’ asked the Horse.

The youth then told him about the Old Woman, and that what she had advised him to do, he had done. Said the Dog,

‘She, my boy, was the Good Fate, and the other Fates have blinded her because she has never done evil to anyone, and fated her never to recover her sight until she should find somebody to love and pity her. And now, my boy, go this way’—and he pointed to the great staircase—‘and enter the upper chamber. There you will see two captive Princesses, and you must set them free.’

So the youth took his way to the chamber, and found in it two beautiful Princesses, who wondered at seeing him, and asked him how he came there. He told his story, and how he had come to seek the Golden Wand. Said the maidens,

‘We will gladly give thee the Wand if thou wilt set us free.’

They gave him the Wand, and he went and leant it against the Horse, and the Horse became a man; he leant it on the Dog, and the Dog also became a man.

Then said the Princesses, ‘Before we leave

there is another good deed to do. Look out of the window. Those animals you see outside are all men, and Princes besides; they were all out hunting together, and as they found the door open they came in, but—to their misfortune!—the Dhrako saw them and sprinkled them with a liquid which turned them into various animals. Now be quick and strike them lightly on their backs with the Wand, and they will become as they were before.'

Then the Prince went down with the Wand, touched the animals one by one, and immediately they became handsome youths, and began to embrace and kiss the Prince. When the two Princesses had likewise come downstairs, our Prince bethought him, and locked up the palace again, taking the key away with him. The party of released Princes took the road that led to their own palaces, while the two to whom he had first restored their shape went with him to escort the Princesses home. When their parents saw them arrive, you may imagine the rejoicings they made! And they told the youth that he might take for his wife whichever he pleased of their daughters, and



THREE OF HIS BELATED SHIPS HAD COME INTO PORT.
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they would make him heir to the throne. But the Prince replied that his troth was plighted, and that to please his betrothed he had come to seek the Golden Wand. Then one of the two Princes said to the King,

‘If you are willing, my long-lived King, make us bridegrooms instead. For when the Dhrako stole the Princesses, whom we loved, we went to deliver them; and he made a Horse of me, and of my friend he made a Dog.’

The King embraced them both, and said that he would gladly make them his sons-in-law. Then our handsome Prince set out to return to his beautiful Princess. But he did not go on foot as he had come; for the King gave him many carriages and gifts, and accompanied him to the city of the beautiful Princess, while the Princesses, his daughters, wept for joy that they were free, and for grief at the departure of their deliverer.

Well, let us leave them now, and come to the Princess. When she heard that the handsome Prince had gone away, and she saw him no more, she lay down to die of grief. Doctors

and doctresses came to cure her, but could do nothing. Her father was in despair, for he had no other child. So when the Prince arrived at the palace he found all the doors shut, because there was great sorrowing for the Princess, who grew worse every day. Our good Prince then lost no time. He took the Golden Wand in his hand, leant it against one door after another, and they all opened before him until he found himself in the chamber of the love-sick Princess.

‘Loveliest lady!’ he cried, ‘I have brought thee the Golden Wand of the Famous Dhrako! Wilt thou wed me? I love thee to distraction, and have ventured my life for thee!’

The Princess rose from her couch laughing with joy.

‘Thee will I take, and thee only! I was dying of grief because thou had’st left me!’

They kissed and embraced, and she sent for her father, to whom our Prince related all his marvellous adventures. Meanwhile the glad news spread through the palace and the city, and soon was heard the sound of music and drums and great rejoicings. The wedding was held with

great pomp and splendour. The happy pair went home to his father's kingdom, and there they held double rejoicings. And I left them there happy. And may you all be happier still!

XI

THE SNAKE-PRINCE

Scarlet thread, spun on the wheel,
Twisting on the twirling reel,¹
Like the dancers turn and spin,
While I now my tale begin !

ONCE upon a time there was a merchant, and he traded 'all the way to Bagdad,' as the saying is. He had twelve ships which sailed to foreign countries, and he had besides three pretty daughters. Well, as time went on, luck turned against the merchant. His wife died ; one by one he lost his ships ; and every year he became poorer and poorer. At last he had lost all his property with the exception of one farm, and he went to live there with his daughters. As they had now no money to hire labourers, the merchant told the girls that they must set to and work on the farm in order that they might gain a living.

¹ *I.e.* the spindle, with which a Greek peasant woman's hands are constantly occupied.

‘We cannot do farm work,’ replied the two eldest, tossing their heads, ‘we are not accustomed to it.’

But the youngest, whose name was Rosa, loved her father very dearly; and she at once prepared to do as he wished. So she set to with a will, and digged in the garden, and raked, and planted; and when the fruits and vegetables were grown, she rose early in the morning to gather them for her father to carry to market.

Time passed, and after many months tidings came to the merchant that three of his belated ships had come into port laden with costly goods, when he immediately prepared to go to the city. But before mounting his horse, he asked his daughters what each desired as a present. The two eldest begged for fine silken gowns; but when he asked the youngest, she said, ‘I want nothing, papa mine, now that I see you released from your poverty.’ And when her father pressed her, she said, ‘Well, then, papa mine, bring me a rose, a beautiful, sweet-smelling damask rose.’

So the merchant set off for the port, and landed his goods. In twelve days’ time he had sold them all save the two silken gowns which

he had kept for his daughters ; but he had found no rose for the youngest. As he was riding home to his farm, it began to rain so heavily that when they came to the open gateway of a house by the wayside, his horse trotted through it into the courtyard. There was no one about, so he put the horse in the stable, and went up to the house. The door stood wide open, so he walked in and sate himself down on a seat in the hall. At once he found by his side coffee and sweetmeats, and a long pipe filled with fragrant tobacco, without his seeing who had brought them. Presently the rain ceased, and the merchant arose and went from chamber to chamber to seek the host and thank him for the shelter and entertainment. Finding no one, however, he was going forth to take his beast from the stable and continue his journey, when, as he crossed the courtyard, he caught sight of a bush of damask roses which had three blossoms on one stem. No sooner, however, had he stretched out his hand and plucked them than there appeared at his feet a Snake, who said,

‘Ah, thankless man ! After I have opened my doors to save thee from the storm, canst

not see a rose or two without desiring and plucking them ?'

'I sought through the chambers to find the host and say a "Thank you" to him, but found him not,' the merchant replied.

'Listen to me,' then said the Snake. 'Thou hast three daughters, and thou must bring me the youngest. Think not to thyself that I am only a Snake, and cannot come and find thee if thou dost not my bidding.'

The poor man asked how many days' grace he would give him; and he granted him forty days. At last he got home to his house; his daughters gathered round him; and when the two eldest had got their gowns he gave the roses to the youngest, and then sat down weeping.

'What is the matter, papa mine, that you weep?' she asked, anxiously.

Then, as the merchant related his adventure, Rosa's sisters began to reproach her, and point their fingers at her,¹ saying,

'Wretched girl that thou art! A gown was not good enough for thee, but thou must have

¹ The ancient gesture of the *pháskelon*, still in use among the Greek folk.

a damask rose, forsooth, that the Snake might come and destroy us!’

When her father had also told them of the forty days’ grace, Rosa went to her chamber and wrote down the date; and she did not seem at all troubled, though her sisters were continually reproaching her. On the thirty-eighth day she went to her father and said,

‘Papa mine, saddle now the horse so that we may go where I am invited.’

‘Can I take thee, my darling child, to the Snake who will destroy thee?’ cried the unhappy man.

‘The Snake will not destroy me, if I do his bidding,’ replied Rosa. ‘What ill-will can he have against me? Arise, and let us be gone.’

She bade farewell to her sisters; she and her father set out on their journey, and on the fortieth day they arrived at the Snake’s abode. The gate was open, as before, and when the merchant had stabled his horse he led his daughter into the house, and they sate them down. Soon came coffee and sweets, as before, without anyone being seen; and in a little while the Snake appeared and said to the merchant,

‘So thou hast done my bidding and brought thy daughter?’

‘Yea, I have brought her, as I promised,’ he replied; and when he had kissed and embraced his daughter, he mounted his horse and rode home again. But in a few days he fell ill with grief and took to his bed.

So the poor girl was left alone with the Snake. And it became the Snake’s custom, every day when she was taking her coffee after dinner, to climb into her lap and ask her, ‘Wilt thou take me for thy husband?’ And she would reply, ‘But I am afraid of thee.’ And she was very sad and lonely because her father did not come to see her as he had promised.

Well, one day, as she was sitting at the table, it suddenly opened before her and disclosed a mirror in which all the world was reflected; and, when she saw in it her father lying ill in bed, she began to weep and tear her hair. The Snake, who was in the garden, hearing her cries and her breast-beatings, hurried to her and asked,

‘What ails thee, my Rose?’

‘See in the mirror,’ she cried, ‘how my father lies nigh unto death!’

Then said the Snake, 'Open the table drawer and thou wilt find a ring. Put it on thy finger, and tell me how many days thou wilt be absent?'

'I will come back,' she replied, 'as soon as my father recovers.'

'Well, I will give thee thirty-one days' leave. If thou come one day later, thou wilt find me dead on some mound in the garden.'

'Do thyself no harm,' said the girl. 'When my leave has expired I will return to thee.'

The Snake ordered supper to be served, and when she had eaten, he said,

'Put the ring on thy tongue, and thou wilt find thyself at home in thy chamber.'

Rosa lay down, put the ring on her tongue, and closed her eyes. Her father's servants, passing the door of her chamber, heard her breathing, and ran to tell their young mistresses, who hastened in and found her asleep on her bed. The maiden awoke, and when she found that she was indeed at home again she praised God.

Her father was rejoiced to see his Rosa again, and asked her many questions about her life with

the Snake. When she told him what the Snake had said to her every day at dinner-time, and that she had replied, 'But I am afraid of thee,' he said to her,

'My daughter dear, the next time he asks thee that question, do thou answer, "Yea, I will take thee!" and we shall see what will hap.' And she promised to say this.

Her sisters, however, tried to persuade her not to go back, so that the Snake might die and they would be rid of him. But Rosa was indignant, and replied, 'How could I leave my Beast to die, who have received such help from him?'

So she remained with her father, whose joy she was, for as many days as she had leave. Then, bidding him and her sisters farewell, she lay down on her bed, put the ring in her mouth, and went back to the Snake.

When he saw her, he said, 'Ah, thou hast come back to me, my Rose!' And after dinner, when coffee was served, and he lay in her lap as before and asked, 'Wilt thou take me for thy husband?' she replied,

'Yea, I will take thee!'

When she had said these words the Snake's

skin fell off him, and he became a handsome Prince. And the table again opened and all the world was seen therein. Then Rosa asked him what manner of man he was, and how he had become a Snake. And he told her how that he had fallen under the spell of an enchantress who had changed him into a snake, and had doomed him to retain that shape until he should find a maiden who would consent to marry him.

‘But now,’ he said, ‘I will return to my kingdom. Thy father and sisters shall be conveyed thither, and then we will hold our wedding.’

So they were married, and the Prince made his father-in-law his Grand Vizier. And we will leave them well, and return and find them better—God be praised!

XII

THE WIDOW'S SON

ONCE on a time, and an olden time,
And a very long time ago,
When the Turks were keeping the Ramazan
In a leaky old cauldron O,

there lived an old woman, who had been a widow a great many years. She had an only son who, all day long, from dawn to sunset, carried faggots on his back in order to earn his bread and support his old widowed mother. After working in this way for a long time, as he was one day going to the wood he heard a crier who had been hired by a Jew crying on the road, 'Whoever is able to work for me one or two days, I will give him as much money as he wants !'

These words sounded pleasantly in his ears, for he had been thinking on his poverty and his misery; and he ran joyfully to his mother to ask her blessing. His mother did not object, and so he returned to the Jew, received his hire,

took it to his mother, and then followed the Jew. That Jew had ever so many ships under his orders; and when the youth came to his house he led him down to the sea; they embarked in one of the ships, and the others followed. After making a prosperous voyage, they saw on the one hand high and green hills, and on the other hand vineyards and trees and fields, the sight of which made their hearts rejoice. But they sailed on past these, and presently found themselves under a very high mountain, the foot of which was washed by the waves, and the summit lost in the white clouds which floated around it.

There they cast anchor, and when they were come on shore the Jew bade the youth climb to the top of the mountain and then do as he should instruct him. He was rather frightened, and asked how was he to get up. The Jew then gave him a dagger, sewed him up in a hide, and told him that when he knew that the eagles had seized him and carried him up to the top of the mountain, he must slit the hide with his dagger, and come out; and whatever he found on the summit he was to throw down.

As he was bidden, so he did. The birds of

heaven came at the command of the Jew—who was a powerful magician—seized him, and carried him to the top of the mountain; and he slit the hide and came out. What did he see there?—wherever he turned his eyes were millions of diamonds, and golden things, and sapphires lying among myrtles and roses, and surrounded with musk. There you might see everything you could possibly imagine. Instead of stones or flints, gold and diamonds lay about; and on the roses hung pearls instead of dew. The youth stood wondering at the sight; he bit his lips, and crossed his arms,¹ as if he were afraid to step among so much brightness and such wealth. By and by he hears the Jew calling from below, and then he begins picking up and throwing down, throwing with both hands, until he was weary.

The Jew by this time had filled his ships, and he now set sail. The youth called to him from above, and asked what he was to do, but he made no answer. Again he called, but still the Jew took no heed. The poor youth, left alone on the mountain top, then walked round

¹ The Oriental posture of respect or reverence.

and round it in despair. The brilliants and the pearls were all very fine, but of what use were they to him when he had neither bread to eat nor a drop of water to drink? Grief seized upon him. He thought of his poor mother, now left all desolate and lonely; and, weary as he was, with his eyes all red and swollen with weeping, he lay down in the shade of a tree, with his head on a stone—or rather on a great diamond or lump of sapphire. Presently he fancied that he felt it move under him.

‘Perhaps,’ said he to himself, ‘there is some animal underneath.’

Then he lifted up the stone, and saw a trap-door of iron which he also raised. Under it was a ladder, down which he climbed. He goes down, down, forty steps, fifty, I don’t know how many steps, and at the bottom he finds a palace. Not a soul, however, was to be seen about either human or other. He was very hungry, and as he went about looking here and there for something to eat, he came to a cupboard, opened it, and found inside a cake of bread. He ate it, and his hunger was somewhat satisfied. Then he went farther, and searching here and there



THE BIRDS OF HEAVEN CAME, SEIZED HIM, AND CARRIED HIM
TO THE TOP OF THE MOUNTAIN.

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he came upon a blind Dhrako. At first he was afraid, and began to tremble; but when he saw that the Dhrako was blind, he thought that if the Dhrako did not speak to him, he would make himself known to the Dhrako. But still he was afraid and didn't quite know how to set about it. Finally he stole up behind the Dhrako, and said softly,

‘Father! my little father!’

The Dhrako replied, ‘Since when have I had a son?’

‘Ever since I was born,’ said the youth; and the simple Dhrako believed him. He called him to his side, and began to love him as if he were really his son. He gave into his hands forty keys, and told him he might enter all the forty chambers of the palace save one, which he was not on any account to open.

Well, he went and he came; he opened the thirty-nine chambers, and found within all the treasures of God's earth; but the one the Dhrako had told him not to open he did not then open. But after a few days had passed, he began to be curious, and said to himself, ‘Why may I not open that chamber too? There is no doubt

some wonderful thing in it, and the Dhrako is jealous, and does not want me to see it.'

So, after a time, he could refrain no longer, and he opened the door. What did he see? No chamber, but a beautiful garden, so beautiful as to dazzle his eyes. All the choicest trees of the earth were there collected. And amid all this greenness, shaded by the branches, which bent under their weight of delicious fruits, was a marble cistern, glistening white.

While the youth was gazing on the garden, and not knowing what to look at first, there came flying down three most lovely pigeons, how lovely I cannot tell you—you must imagine for yourselves. These pigeons dropped their feathers on the edge of the cistern, and became three maidens so fresh and blooming that the Patriarch himself would have fallen in love with them if he had seen them, and much more so a youth. Then the maidens plunged into the cistern, and swam quietly about as if no one was looking at them. And how should they know that he saw them from inside the doorway? But see how his eyes glisten, and a scalding tear falls on his cheek!

Well, what would you?—such is love! It steals cunningly into the heart when we are least aware of it! But, enough of that!

So he gazed at the maidens, gazed at all three of them, and liked them all; but he gave most glances to the youngest, for his heart told him that she was the best. Then, while he was still gazing, they suddenly came out of the water, took up their feathers, and put them on again; and the youth saw with dismay the three beautiful maidens disappear, and three pigeons fly away up into the heavens.

You may imagine his grief! He locked the door of the chamber, and went, grief-stricken and distraught, to the Dhrako. The Dhrako asks what is the matter with him that he sits moping there.

‘How shall I tell thee?’ he replied. ‘It happened this way: I opened the chamber and saw this and that. Well, I repent of it, but of what use is that now that I am in such affliction, and my heart has gone out from me?’

When he had thus spoken, the Dhrako forgave him, and advised him to go early in the morning when the maidens were bathing, watch

where they left their feathers, and take the plumage of the one that pleased him best and hide it; for, if she were to see it again, she would seize hold of it and escape.

So the next day he went as the Dhrako had told him, seized the plumage of the youngest—the one he liked best—and took it with him into the house. The two eldest, when they had finished bathing, donned their feathers and flew up at once into the heavens. The other searched here and there for her feathers, but could not find them, so there she was! Then the youth came out and approached her. She begged him to give her back her feathers, and she would promise not to escape. But not he!—he would not give them, and so he took her for his wife.

The couple lived happily together for some time, and two children were born to them. Then the youth related to the Dhrako how he had come there, and the Dhrako asked him if he would not like to go home to his mother. At this he rejoiced greatly. So he bids good-bye to the Dhrako, who gives him lots of money, and opens the mountain for him to go

out with his children and his wife, whom he loved like his own eyes.

Well, they travelled a long way, and at last they came to the place where his widowed mother lived. Imagine the joy of the widow when she saw her son, and with him this goddess and his two dear children, whom you might call little angels. Shortly afterwards he gives the plumage to his mother and begs her to hide it safely, lest perchance his wife might find it, and he should lose her. She, however, put it in a place where it could easily be found; and some days afterwards, while the youth was away from home, his wife managed by some means or other to find the feathers. Throwing off her gown and her other clothes, she donned the feathers, gave a wing-feather to each child, flew with them up to the roof, and then called out to the widow,

‘Tell my husband that he must take a pair of iron shoes, and an iron staff, and come to find me in—

“The castles green, the castles red, the five tall towers white.”

When she had said these words, she sprang into

the air and was lost to the old woman's sight. Her son came home, and finding no wife or child, began to weep, and was quite inconsolable until his mother repeated to him what the Nereid had said just before she flew away. Day and night he pondered on the means of recovering his wife, for he knew not where those places were of which she had spoken to his mother. He turned it this way and that, but could make nothing of it. Then he bethought him of going to the Dhrako, who had been like a father to him, for he might possibly know where the pigeons lived who bathed in his garden and became women.

So the Widow's Son goes again to the Jew, as he had done before, and they set off for the foot of the mountain. This time, however, he throws him down neither diamonds nor anything else, but leaves him to tear his hair. He looks for the trap-door, goes down to the Dhrako, greets him, relates all that has happened, and then questions him concerning his wife's directions.

The Dhrako gave him the iron shoes and the iron staff and bade him set out, for he would

soon find means to reach the palace of his beloved one. So he tramped and tramped along; and, presently, coming to a lonely place, he found two men there quarrelling and fighting. He went up to them, and asked what they were making all that noise about, and they replied, 'Why, look here, brother! We have this Poplar, this Sword, and this Cap, and we can't agree how to divide them between us.'

When the youth heard this, he couldn't help laughing at the idea of their killing each other for such a small matter. But when he cried, 'Pooh! are those things worth fighting and quarrelling about?' they explained to him that whoever should put that Cap on his head would, together with it, become invisible; whoever should climb into that Poplar and shake it would be carried to any place he might mention; and whoever held the Sword in his hand and bade it do so, it would cut down everything before it.

When the youth heard this, he took a fancy to have these objects, and said, 'Good fellows, I can divide them fairly between you. I will throw my staff to a distance, and whoever runs

and brings it first to me shall find his share ready for him to take.'

Then, while they are both running to bring the staff, he dons the Cap, girds on the Sword, climbs up into the Poplar, and vanishes; and when they return they find only the Poplar. The youth then climbs to the top of the tree and tells it to take him to—

'The castles green, the castles red, the five tall towers white.'

He had hardly said the words when—there you are!—he had arrived at the place he mentioned. Leaving the Poplar and the Sword in a certain spot, and still wearing the Cap so as not to be seen, he enters the castles to find his wife and children. He first goes round this way, and then round that way, and at last he finds his wife among the fowls in the poultry-yard, where her father had put her when she came back, as she had disgraced the family by wedding a human. He goes up to her, makes himself known, and proposes to her to fly with him.

Said she, 'We will first tell my father, and then we will go.'

After a little while they heard her father coming down. She was afraid, but the youth stood still and told her to take no notice of him. Then he put on the Cap and became invisible without stirring thence.

Her father comes near and asks her, 'Who is hidden here? I smell human flesh.'

She replied that it was her husband, who had come to fetch her. He then asked her if he might see him, for he wanted to know what manner of man he was. She, however, did not allow her husband to show himself, as she feared that her father would kill him—for *those who have the heartache live ever in dread*. Then her father—who was the King of the Nereids—said that he would give her back to her husband if he could throw down for him a mountain which stood near, and make it into gardens, thinking that this was just as if he had said, 'I will never give her!'—for it was not possible to imagine that he could ever succeed in accomplishing such a task!

And so she pretended to believe. But when her father had gone away, she called her husband and gave him a tile which she bade him throw,

after nightfall, into a certain well, and he would see a crowd of men come out to whom he must give his orders.

So he went as his wife directed him, and threw the tile into the well, and there flew out—what shall I say?—thousands of men. He gave them his orders, saying, ‘By to-morrow morning I want that mountain removed, and in its place let gardens be planted with every kind of tree and flower.’

He had hardly finished speaking, when they set to and began working. In the morning, when her father got up, he opened the window, and what did he see? The mountain was gone, and in its place were gardens—but such gardens!—with trees and flowers and fountains; how shall I tell you what all?—indescribable marvels! He could hardly believe it; he thought he must be dreaming, rubbed his eyes, and rubbed them again, until he found that it was no delusion. Then he went to his daughter, and said to her,

‘Well, that has been accomplished. But now I require the garden to be turned into a sea with ships sailing upon it.’

The Nereid again gave her husband a tile, and

—not to make a long story of it—there happened what had happened before, and the garden became a sea with schooners and feluccas and every other vessel you might wish to see. Then, when this had been accomplished, the youth presented himself before the King of the Nereids, with his magical Sword girt round his waist and his wife at his side. When her father and mother saw their daughter's husband, they fell upon him to devour him. But he lost no time in saying, 'Little Sword of mine, cut them down!' and it cut them down.

So now they were at peace, and he set out with his wife and children—travelling on the Poplar—to return to the Dhrako, and afterwards to his mother's house. Then the Nereid remembered that she and her sisters had taken out the eyes of the Dhrako, and had hidden them in a cave. So the youth took her there on the Poplar; and when they had got the eyes of the Dhrako, they returned to the palace, and put them back in their sockets. The Dhrako was delighted, as you may suppose, at recovering his sight, and he said to the Widow's Son,

'Leave thy wife and children here, and go

fetch thy mother. 'Thou art my son in very deed, and all that I have is thine!'

So he climbed the Poplar, fetched his mother, and they all lived happily together in the Dhrako's palace. And may we live more happily still!

XIII

THE TALKING WAND

LONG, long ago, in the olden time, each of the islands of the Ægean Sea formed a separate kingdom with a King of its own. Well, the King of Naxos had an only daughter, the like of whom for beauty was not to be found anywhere. All the other Kings wanted to marry her, and her father was much perplexed about it, for, as he said to himself, 'If I give her to the King of Paros, the Kings of Tinos, Ios, Mykonos and all the rest of them will make war on me.'

So he called his Twelve Counsellors and asked their advice. And the counsel of the Twelve was that the Princess should pretend to be dumb, and that the suitor who could make her speak after three days' trial should marry her; but, if he failed, he should lose his head when the three days were expired.

Well, there went Kings and the sons of Kings,

but none could make the Princess speak; so every three days the King took one of their heads, which he put in three towers he had built for the purpose, until at last all the towers were full of heads.

Let us now leave these royal folk and come to the island of Syra where lived a poor old woman who had an orphan grandson, and had toiled and moiled and even begged so that she might bring him up decently. He was now grown a handsome youth; and when he heard about the dumb Princess of Naxos, he said to the old woman,

‘Granny mine, I will go and make the Princess speak!’

‘My boy, my dear boy, knowest not that the sons of Kings and the sons of Princes have gone, and none of them all has been able to make her speak, so how shouldst thou, a poor ignorant lad? Wilt thou go and lose thy young life, who art my joy and the prop of my old age?’

But still the youth insisted upon going. And when the old woman saw that his mind was made up, and there was no turning him from his purpose, she said, ‘Well, then, go first and say

good-bye to thy great-aunt, my sister, for she is a wise woman, and will doubtless advise thee well.'

So he goes to his great-aunt and says, 'Great-auntie, give me thy hand that I may kiss it,¹ and say good-bye, for I am going to Naxos to try my luck with the Princess; and perhaps she will not speak and I shall lose my head.'

Then, like her sister, the old woman tried to dissuade him. But when she saw that her words had no weight with him, she went to the cupboard, took out a switch, and, putting it in his hand, said,

'Here, then, take this Magic Wand, and when thou hast propped it up, speak to it, and it will answer thee.'

Well, he took ship, and sailed away to Naxos; and when he had landed and was come to the gate of the city where the King lived, he told the guards there that he had come to make the Princess speak. Said the officer to him, 'See'st thou those towers? They are filled with the heads of Kings' and Princes' sons who have

¹ The customary salutation offered to the elders of a family among all the nationalities of the Near East.

tried and failed. One head only is now lacking to complete the number.'

'Let mine be that head!' cried the youth, nothing daunted; and so they gave him permission to try his luck. At sunset he entered the palace and was led to the Princess's chamber, where the guards kept watch outside the door.

'Good evening, my Princess,' said our hero. But the lady did not even turn her head!

'Ah, my Princess, do you not pity a poor fellow whose mother is a widow and whose only support he is, but still has abandoned her for your sake alone, and yet you will not even turn to look at him?' And in such wise he talked until morning dawned, when the guards opened the doors, and he went away.

The next evening he goes again and says, 'Good evening, beautiful Princess—*At a deaf door, they say, it is useless to knock.*' And then he began to sigh and to beseech her to have pity on him. But to no purpose.

The third evening he had gone to the Princess's apartments quite in despair, when, all of a sudden, he recollected the advice of his great-aunt. Fortunately, he still held the Wand in



ONE DAY HIS GLASS FELL ON THE WINDOW OF THE PRINCESS
WHILE SHE SAT THERE EMBROIDERING.

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his hand, and, going to the Door, he propped it up there, and said,

‘Hey, my good Door, the Princess won’t speak to me, so perhaps you will instead.’

Then the Wand spoke, and, pretending to be the Door, it said, ‘What can I tell you, dear boy? I was once a tree on the mountain, and they cut me down, and sawed me asunder into planks. They took me to a carpenter who planed me and made me into a door for the Princess’s chamber. Now, it is nothing but *shut, open*, all day long, and so they wear my life away!’

‘O Princess!’ cries the youth, ‘hear you not how even your Door speaks to me, yet you will not, and they will take my young life!’

Then he picks up the Wand, carries it to the great Candlestick,¹ and props it up there, crying, ‘O golden Candlestick, the Princess will not speak to me, will not thou have pity on me?’

‘Ah, dear boy, what can I say?—I who was but ore in the earth, and they smelted me and

¹ A candelabra, holding many lights, which stands on the floor in Oriental palaces.

took me to the smith. Now, it is nothing but *rub, rub*, to make me shine, and so they wear my life away.'

The early dawn was now come, and the youth was getting rather frightened, for if the Princess had not spoken by sunrise off would go his head. So he went on tiptoe to the Princess as she sat on her cushions, and leaned the Wand against her without her being aware of anything. Then, stepping back, he addressed the Princess, saying,

'O lady, thy Door and thy Candlestick speak to me, and yet thou art mute!'

Then the Wand said, 'Peace, peace, young man, I am sleepy.'

When the Princess heard this, she thought that it was she who had spoken, being drowsy and off her guard; but she cried angrily, 'I did not speak!'

'Whether you spoke before or not, my Princess, at least you have spoken now,' laughed the youth. 'But,' he continued, 'I will say to the King that you have *not* spoken, for as so many Princes have tried in vain and lost their heads unjustly, he may be angry and destroy us both.'

So when the day broke he left her ; and as he went forth the guards questioned him, and he replied that the Princess had not spoken. So they laid hold of him and led him before the King, who sent for the Twelve. When they were all seated in the Council-chamber, the youth thus addressed them—

‘My lord the King, and worshipful gentlemen! In my native place there happened a certain incident. A Priest, a Tailor, and a Carpenter set out on a journey in company. At sunset, just as darkness was overtaking them in the desert, they came to a half-ruined and uninhabited hut, and resolved to pass the night in it. But as there were neither bolts nor bars to the door, they agreed to keep watch and watch for four hours each. The first watch fell to the Carpenter, and in order to keep himself awake he carved the figure of a man from a stump of wood, set it up in front of the hut, and when his watch was over he woke up the Tailor and lay down in his place. After a little, the Tailor saw the figure and guessed that the Carpenter had wished to play off a joke on him. So, to keep himself awake, he opened his bag and

dressed up the figure in breeches and jacket, put a cap on his head, and when he had watched four hours he called the Priest and lay down. The good *Papas*, to keep himself awake, lighted a candle, and began to pace up and down reading his prayer-book. Presently, as he passed the doorway, he chanced to look up and saw the figure. At first he was terribly frightened, but on going up to it he saw that, though it looked so life-like, it was no living man. Then he fell on his knees and prayed fervently to the Maker of all things to give it life. And God commanded the image to speak, and it became human; and when the three set off again on their journey, it walked with them to the town. Arrived there, they went before the judge, because they had already begun to dispute as to which of them the newly made man belonged. For the Carpenter claimed him because he had fashioned him out of wood, the Tailor because he had dressed him, and the Priest because he had made him speak. I, however, came away without hearing the judge's decision. So I pray you to tell me to whom should he belong—to the Carpenter who fashioned him, the Tailor who

clothed him, or the Priest who made him speak?’

Then the Twelve with the King decided that the Carpenter ought to be paid for his labour, and the Tailor for the clothes, but that the Priest must have the man. When they had thus pronounced, the youth said,

‘Then, my lord the King and your Excellencies, the Princess belongs to me. It is I who have made her speak! Ask her if it is not true.’

The Princess was then sent for to the Council-chamber where she acknowledged before the assembly that she had indeed spoken to the youth. So there was an end to the King’s decree; and the wedding was held, and there were feastings and carousals and great rejoicings. The youth sent for his old grandmother from Syra; and she lived in the palace, and in place of the boiled beans she had formerly eaten, she now ate partridges.

XIV

THE BEAUTIFUL PRINCESS

THERE was once a King who had a very beautiful daughter, and many of the neighbouring Princes sent matchmakers to ask her in marriage, but she refused them all.

One day a summons came to the King to go on a campaign. Before leaving he charged his daughter to live very quietly in the palace until his return, as she had no mother or other relative to take care of her. The Princess loved her father dearly, and she promised to do his bidding.

When her father had departed with his soldiers, the Princess sat every day at her window for several hours embroidering. At a little distance was the palace of another King who had a son; and every day this Prince, when he had finished his duties, took out his spyglass and looked at all the country round about. One day his glass fell on the window of the Princess while she

sat there embroidering, and he said to himself, 'Who can this beautiful maiden be?'

When he had enquired of his people, he learnt that she was the daughter of the neighbouring King, and that her father was away at the wars. Then he went and walked up and down the road in front of the palace for an hour or two every day; but as the Princess did not lean out of her window he saw nothing of her, and he was devoured with longing for 'a sight of her fair face.

One day, however, as the Princess was cutting her thread, the scissors fell out of her hand into the street below. She leaned out to look where they had fallen, and saw a handsome Prince standing under the window and holding the scissors in his hand. She says to her nurse,

'Go down and fetch my scissors which have fallen out of the window.'

When the nurse came out, she asked the Prince to give to her the scissors, as they belonged to the Princess, her mistress. He begged her to allow him to return them to her himself, as he was a King's son. But the nurse replied that no man might enter the palace

during the King's absence; and the Prince went away sorrowful, for he had found the maiden, on closer view, more beautiful even than he had deemed.

A few days later the Princess was twisting silk for her embroidery, and she hung her spindle out of the window to make a long thread. Our Prince, who was not far off, runs up, breaks the thread, and the spindle falls into the roadway. The Princess leans out and sees the same youth holding her spindle.

'*Ouf!*' says she to the nurse, 'he is for ever under the window. Go and take the spindle from him.'

So he gives the spindle back to the nurse; and for many days the Princess came no more to the window. When he could no longer get a glimpse of her he sought counsel from one of his friends and begged his help.

Said his friend, 'I will tell you what to do, my Prince. Build new baths, and when they are ready send a crier round to invite everybody to go there and bathe during three days, and afterwards your mother the Queen must invite all the Princesses and the Viziers' daughters

to the baths, and you must instruct the bath-woman to attend to your Princess later than the others, and keep her there when the rest are gone. And afterwards you can come to the baths and speak with her.'

The Prince approved of this plan, and gave the masons orders to build fine new Turkish baths, all of marble and alabaster; and he went himself every day to superintend the work. By and by one person whispered to' another, and she in her turn told a third, until at last it came to the ears of the nurse that the Prince was building the bath for the sake of her mistress, so that he might see her; and she in her turn told the Princess.

Now the Princess had a pet dog so clever that it could not only understand everything she said to it, but could also speak. One day she said to it,

'Hie thee to the baths which the Prince is building; when he has come and gone, return at once and tell me what coloured clothes the Prince wears.'

The dog went, came back, and told her that the Prince wore green-and-gold velvet, and

was riding on a white horse. The Princess, without losing time, donned clothes of green-and-gold velvet, mounted a white horse, went to the bath, and said to the master-mason,

‘I forgot to tell you something.’ She then took him into the baths and said to him, ‘Here, in the inner chamber, you must raise this slab, and make a passage from hence to lead to the palace of the other King. But the matter must remain private; you must work secretly at night; and if anyone learns that this passage has been made, off go all your heads! No one is to know of it. Not even to me are you to mention it—either to tell me that the passage is finished or anything else; for I shall see when it is finished, and shall thank you without your mentioning it at all.’ She then takes out and gives him a bag of sequins, saying, ‘That is to pay for the passage.’

When she had again bidden him to work in secret, she rode away, returned to the palace, undressed, put on her women’s clothes, and sat down to her embroidery.

Some time passed, and the Princess learnt

that the bath was almost finished, and that the people of the neighbourhood had been invited to bathe there on the following day. Says she to the little dog,

‘Go to the baths, and see what clothes the Prince is wearing, and when he leaves come quickly and tell me.’

The little dog went, watched when the Prince left, and came and said to her, ‘He is wearing red-and-gold velvet, and rides a black horse.’

Without losing time, our Princess dons red-and-gold velvet clothes, mounts a black horse, and rides to the bath. Seeing the master-mason, she beckons to him; he comes up, and she asks, ‘Is *all* now quite finished?’

‘It is, my Prince,’ he replies, ‘and no one knows anything about it.’

Says the Princess to him, as she gave him a handful of sequins, ‘Be silent still, and thou shalt not repent it. Say nothing, and forget that thou hast made the passage!’

She whippèd her horse and went off, returned to the palace, changed, and sat down to her embroidery. When it was dark, she took a lamp, and went below to a cellar where she

saw a square slab. She raised it, and went straight to the inner chamber of the bath. After seeing that it all was right, she returned home, and went to sleep. When three days had passed, the Princess received an invitation from the Prince's mother begging her to go and bathe at the baths at the same time as the other noble maidens.

So she took her nurse and went to the baths, where she found other noble maidens, and while they waited their turn they talked and laughed, sang and frolicked, after the manner of young maidens. The bathwoman took them one by one, soaped and scrubbed them and plaited their hair; but when the Princess called to her she always replied,

‘Presently, my lady! Directly, my Princess! —have a little patience!’ and so managed to leave her to the last. Then she took our Princess in hand, and filled her eyes with soapsuds, so that by the time she was able to open them again, all the other maidens had left the bath. When she came out at last into the cool chamber what should she see but the young Prince entering by the other door!

‘Ah, my Prince,’ she cried, ‘wait, I beg of you, until I have bathed and dressed, and then I will come and talk with you.’ And she darted back into the inner bath and fastened the door. She then raises the slab, takes the two pigeons which she had left in the underground passage, and puts them, with their wings tied, in the tank, to make a splashing noise and make the Prince think she was still there. This done, she enters the passage, lets down the slab again softly, softly, and returns home to the palace.

Let us now leave her and return to the Prince who, waiting in the outer chamber, and hearing the *splish splash, splish splash* of the pigeons in the basin, thought it was the Princess washing herself. At last he loses patience, and calls out,

‘Come, beautiful Princess, it grows late, and I am dying to see and talk with you!’ And many other foolish things he said, and finally, hearing no reply from within, but only the *splish splash* of the pigeons, he said to himself,

‘Now I will see what she is doing in there!’ He bursts open the door, and what does he

see? Two pigeons in the tank, and nothing more.

‘Bless me!’ he cries, ‘what the devil was she? —a Peri, perhaps, and she has vanished.’

What could be the meaning of it all? He went home sorrowful and troubled and could not sleep. After some thought he decided to give a feast in the open air, and invite to it all the noble maidens, and with them the Princess.

Well, the table was spread on the broad verandah of the upper floor, and all the maidens assembled, and our Princess among them. When they had eaten and amused themselves, they one by one arose, took leave of the Prince and his mother, and rode away. The Princess also asked that her horse might be brought, and they said, ‘Now, my lady!’ and ‘Directly, my Princess!’ but still delayed to bring it; and at last there remained only the Prince and herself, and it was now dark night.

The Princess pretended not to mind. ‘Oh, well,’ she said, laughing, ‘if you will not let me have my horse I cannot go home. I will go and walk in the garden.’

‘I fear you will escape me again,’ replied the Prince.

‘Then tie a string to my hand, and do thou hold the other end. I shall then be unable to go far.’

The Prince does so. Our good Princess runs downstairs to the courtyard, where the horses are, unties the string from her hand and ties it to the headstall of the Prince’s horse, mounts her own, and *Hi!* straight she goes off home.

The Prince waits a while, but she does not return. He looks below but can see nothing, pulls the string, at first gently, then harder, and presently his horse begins to kick and plunge at the foot of the stairs, and he runs down to find the string fastened to its headstall.

‘Soul of me! This is no human being!’ he cries. ‘She must be either a Nereid or a Peri!’ And he was much disturbed, and could not be consoled for the loss of her.

A day or two afterwards one of his friends said to him, ‘My Prince, why not marry some one else, and forget her who does you such despite?’

So he resolved to marry; and his mother the Queen sent go-betweens to a neighbouring King to arrange a marriage with his daughter. The betrothal took place, and preparations for the wedding were being made. When our Princess heard of it, she sent her little dog to find out which tailor¹ was making the dresses for the bride; and when he brought her word she said to him, 'Go now and see what clothes the Prince is wearing.'

The dog went, and when he came back he said, 'He is wearing white-and-gold velvet, and rides a white horse. I saw him just now leave the tailor's.'

The Princess, without loss of time, put on a white-and-gold velvet suit, mounted a white horse, and went to the tailor's. Said she, 'Listen to me. I came before and told you about the wedding garments; but I have changed my mind—cut them into bits, and make them into coats for my greyhounds and into tobacco-bags, and say nothing to anyone, or—off goes your head! Say only, "They are ready," without being asked

¹ In the East the bride's wedding dress is provided by the bridegroom.

what.' She gives him a handful of sequins, and goes away.

The tailor, according to the (supposed) King's orders, cut up the cloth into tobacco-bags and coats for the greyhounds, saying, as he did so, 'What a pity—such stuff! They may well say, "*At the King's orders, dogs are tied up.*"'¹

Then the King sends his servant to ask if the things are ready.

'Certainly,' says he, 'and I was just about to bring them to the palace.'

First of all he took out a tobacco-bag.

'Oh, you made a tobacco-bag, too?' said the King. 'Well done!'

'Not one only; as you commanded me, so I did.'

'*Aï*, let us see the others!'

He takes out first a greyhound's coat.

Said the King, 'What is this that thou hast sat down and made?—for the greyhound only?'

'But no, my long-lived King, I made for the bloodhound too.'

'*Bré*, what sayest thou? Art thou in thy senses?—or art thou gone mad?'

¹ A Greek proverb.

‘But I do not understand, my King. Did you not come and command me to make coats for the greyhounds and for the bloodhounds?’

‘When did I come?’

‘Why, on the same day on which you gave me the stuffs you came back again in your white clothes and on your white horse, and bade me make them up for the hounds, and not for the Queen.’

‘Well,’ said the King, ‘take more stuffs, and see that thou listen to no one, whatever they may say to thee, but finish the wedding dresses; even if I myself should come, give no heed to me again.’

The tailor went away. Then the King reflected and said,

‘Why, it must have been *the* Princess! *She* went and gave the orders! But I will get married and she may burst!’

So when he had ordered the clothes for his bride, the Queen Mother set the people to wash corn; they filled sacks and charged the millers not to grind for others, because the wedding of the Prince was to take place and the royal corn

would be sent. So the millers stopped the mills and waited for the King's corn, to grind it.

Then our Princess says again to her dog, 'Go and see what clothes the Prince wears.'

'Purple¹-and-gold velvet, and he rides on a red horse,' reported the little dog.

She loses no time, but dons purple velvet, leaps on the horse, and is off at a gallop.

'Hi!' she calls to those who were with the mules carrying the corn, 'Hi!' ' '

They say to each other, 'Stop, I say—it is the King!'

'Empty all of them into the sea, for we have found out that the corn is poisoned; and then come back and fill them with sound grain to grind!'

They obeyed, poor fellows, and, one by one, they emptied the sacks into the sea.

'Wash the sacks, too, in the sea, and return quickly!' And the Princess whipped her horse and came home. Said she to herself,

'Now I am in for it! The King will be furious, and he will come and kill me, and small blame to him. But again, what could I do who

¹ *Melitzanià*, the colour of the *brinjal*, or *aubergine*.

love him dearly, and don't want him to marry another, and my father away from home? Let me see now what I can do.'

She takes a skin and fills it with treacle,¹ stands it on a high stool against a big cupboard built between two rooms,² and dresses it as if it were herself. She squeezes it and, with a kerchief, makes it a neck; round the neck she hangs pearls, and puts on it her best gown; on the head she places a fez covered with pearls, throws a scarf over it, and covers its face with a long veil. In the middle of the cupboard-door was a knot, which she took out, and passed a string through the hole. The Princess locked the chamber in which she herself was, and left open the door of the room in which the skin was.

When the Prince saw the mules come back with empty sacks he asked the men, 'Where is the flour?'

'But we threw it away, my King, as you ordered us, because it was poisoned, and we washed the sacks and have come back to take the sound corn.'

¹ *Petimézi*, a syrup made from grape-juice, and much used instead of sugar.

² One of the large wall-cupboards, used in Eastern houses for storing bedding.

‘What! Did *I* tell you that the corn was poisoned?’

‘Yes, my King, you called to us and told us that it was poisoned, and that we must come back and take more.’

‘Oh, very well!’ said the Prince, and sent them away. ‘But this is not to be borne with!’ he said to himself. ‘I will go and kill her!’ And he rushed off, so angry was he, and went to our Princess’s palace, ran upstairs, and went straight to the room where the skin stood.

‘Stop, stop!’ he cried. ‘You needn’t try to hide in the cupboard! I have come to kill you; you shall not escape me again!’

She pulls the string from within, and the skin makes a bow.

‘Was it not thou whom I locked in the inner chamber, and thought was bathing, and thou didst leave two pigeons in the basin, and I knew not how the devil thou didst arise and flee?’

She pulls the string, and the skin bows its head, as if to say—‘Yes!’

‘Was it not thou who told me that thou wert mine when I spread a table, and didst arise and flee, and tied the string to my horse,

and I pulled and pulled from upstairs, and nearly strangled it?’

Again she pulls the string from within, and again the skin bows.

‘Was it not thou who went to the tailor’s and told them to rip up the clothes of my bride and make them into tobacco-bags and coats for the hounds?’

‘Yes!’ again assented the skin.

‘Was it not thou who went and told my people to throw away into the sea the corn; and they came back to me with empty sacks, swinging their legs on the horses and asking me for corn to grind?’

She pulls the string—‘Yes!’

‘Then I have now a right to kill thee!’

‘Yes,’ nodded the figure.

He makes a stroke with his sword, and cuts the gown and the skin right across.

‘Ah, the wretch! Her blood is black!’

Then our Princess opens the chamber door. ‘Stay!’ she cries. ‘Thou hast made thy complaint against me, now hear my defence!’

When the Prince sees her whom he thought was dead, and hears her words, he lets his sword fall in his fright.

‘What!’ he cries, ‘is she still alive?’

‘Yea, I am alive, my Prince, and now hear me. For all that I have done to thee I have done because I love thee and could not let thee wed another. Wait but a little while till my father returns, and he shall give me to thee with his blessing. Then shall I come to thy palace as beseems thy bride.’

‘Thou hast done well,’ he replied, ‘and I will wed none but thee!’ Then he kissed her; and when they had exchanged rings he returned home and told his mother to return to his betrothed all her presents, because he was going to take for his wife the beautiful Princess whom he loved so well. After a short time the King her father returned home victorious, and the wedding was celebrated with

Feast and song and dances gay,
And rejoicings many a day.

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